

THE KINGDOM OF THE CHILD

ALICE MINNIE HERTS HENIGER

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THE KINGDOM OF THE CHILD



"Six months in America and he is Abraham Lincoln"

THE KINGDOM OF THE CHILD

BY
ALICE MINNIE HERTS HENIGER

AUTHOR OF "THE CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL THEATRE"

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
G. STANLEY HALL, PH.D.



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Printed in the United States of America

TO MY HUSBAND

Who has worked with me in the development of the Children's Educational Theatre from its inception, and without whom the work could never have been carried on, this book is affectionately dedicated.

PREFACE

ABOUT two years after the publication of the book, "The Children's Educational Theatre" (1911) numerous letters from teachers and parents came to me and still continue to come in large numbers, asking me to write another book which shall give some suggestions concerning the methods employed in my work of developing in children and adolescents the instinct to characterize or to enact parts in games and plays which lie outside of their restricted environment.

Since the inception of The Children's Educational Theatre fifteen years ago, the idea that drama might be used as a potent educational force in connection with school, church and settlement work, has grown by leaps and bounds. There is scarcely a school in this country which does not prepare a play or a pageant for its commencement or a settlement which does not

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offer some dramatic entertainment at Christmas tide and other holiday seasons. The churches have been slower than the schools and settlements to re-attach themselves to the educative power of drama, a power they employed with fine and lasting results centuries ago; but the churches now are beginning to regain their temporarily lost inheritance and all educators throughout the United States are keenly alive to the importance of training the dramatic instinct of childhood and youth.

I think we may all agree that the cause of drama as an embroidery on the robe of education has been won. School superintendents, principals, teachers and parents recognize the overwhelming interest which children evince in the plays which they prepare for seasonal periods.

What is not generally recognized is the fact that this tremendous interest on the part of children and young people in this method of learning should be used as the very foundation of the robe and not as its mere external embroidery. This matter of drama in the schools

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is not a matter of putting a little embroidery on the garment, it is a fundamental thing, basic and involving the deepest of all the human instincts, the great habitudes of the race.

Through the right use of drama as an integral part of the school system we shall prepare the *soul* of childhood and give to our country the thing that it most urgently needs: proper patrons of the arts of song and of story. Perhaps only through the right use of the dramatic instinct in the everyday life of the school shall we be able to train our future citizens for the arts of leisure. We are all beginning to realize that in the schools and perhaps also in the American homes to-day we are laying too great stress upon the mere vocational aspects of life. For "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

We need to take our cue from the child and make drama a vital part of the life of the school just as every child makes drama the foundation of his self-initiated play.

For this intimate and fructifying use of drama, this contact at every point with all other

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methods now used in the schools, the cause has still to *be* won.

The cause never will be really won until every teacher and every parent intelligently understands that the dramatic method is not something extraneous which must now be added to the already overburdened school curriculum. It is something which must be used as an integral part of every lesson to which its use is applicable because the jewel of voluntary attention on the part of the pupil is the teacher's greatest asset.

Furthermore, I believe the cause will never be won until the teachers in general recognize the composite nature of the child and utilize fully the emotional nature of youth as a help in their class periods in reading, history, literature, etc.

During the past four years in the Extension Teaching Department of Columbia University I have directed a normal course for teachers, settlement workers and parents. The subject of the course is "Methods of Using the Dramatic Instinct in Education and Recreation," and

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some of the greatest educators in this country take part in conducting this course. Here the students learn how to nurture this vital plant called Dramatic Instinct: how to avoid the temptation of dwarfing it by employing the apparently easy method of imitation instead of the method of securing the genuine, sincere, honest expression which the normal child craves.

If there is anything in the following chapters which proves to be stimulating and helpful to my readers it is because what is contained therein is founded on a long experience in dealing with the creative instinct of childhood and youth through the production of many plays and with many casts of players.

Some of the material incorporated in this book has appeared from time to time in articles in "The Outlook," "The Atlantic Monthly," "Good Housekeeping" and "The Pedagogical Seminary." Although not in the exact form in which it here appears, I am indebted to the editors of these magazines for generous permission to re-incorporate the material.

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THE KINGDOM OF THE CHILD



The Kingdom of the Child

INTRODUCTION

TO Mrs. Alice Minnie Herts Heniger belongs the credit of having first conceived and a little later (some fifteen years ago) having established the Children's Theatre. It was a bold and original conception and attracted wide attention from men like President Eliot, Mark Twain, Professor Baker of Harvard, and many other literary men, educators, and friends and students of children generally. Its author, trained in the great school of dramatic art in Paris, never dreamed of teaching children or adolescents to become actors or actresses, and she persistently resisted all ideals of commercialization and clung with rare tenacity and sagacity to the purely educational development of the dramatic instinct. Her idea was the sound and insightful one that in each child slumbered

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the possibilities, of not only all the experience, but all the vital imaginative power of the race, and to develop this before the "shades of the prison-house" closed in and advancing adulthood brought its inevitable limitations and specializations was her leading idea. She realized that the dramatic instinct was the key to play, story-telling, and many other things, and that one of the most fundamental impulses and needs of childhood was to escape its limitations in time, space and circumstances, and to relive the richly variegated life of humanity itself, and that thus only the most precious wealth and worth of psychic heredity could be assured, and the basis be best laid for every kind of humanistic culture, including religion itself. Imagination, even in its most absorbing childish form of reverie and day-dreaming, is not vital enough for the child, but its fancies must always and everywhere be put into action, to be really real for it and to exert its full culture power. Thus what the author calls the kingdom of the child represents really unfallen manhood and womanhood in their pristine richness, variety and hap-

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piness, where undistracted from too great or premature pressure of reality, it can evolve those ancestral impulses, one ounce of which is better than a ton of environmental influences at this stage. Educators have always, in great periods of reconstruction and advance, from Plato down to Herbart and Froebel, insisted upon the principle of spontaneity; but it has never been so completely put into actual working form as in the movement represented by this book.

The movement its author represents has had various phases, as her brief and modest introduction shows. It began as an ideal and opportunity, then was incorporated and put to work under not too favorable outward circumstances, and some thoughtful observers were led to wonder whether this woman was not building wiser than she knew, and were curious to learn just what conceptions underlay her efforts, and how clearly she herself had grasped its fundamental principles. Her first book gave a partial and this gives a much more comprehensive and satisfactory answer to this query,

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because it shows us conclusively that whether or not her organization was impelled by a blind instinct or genius at first, it is apparent *now* that its author has a perfectly clear idea of its very important and needed central position in any educational scheme, and this book setting forth her fundamental conceptions is a real and original contribution to both educational methods and to our knowledge of childhood.

It was a source of great satisfaction to the friends of the dramatic movement that she accepted an opportunity at Columbia University to give it a philosophical and scholastic status, where it could compete freely for full academic recognition with older established subjects. The insight that it had in it the possibility of this academic development showed pedagogic sagacity on the part of the authorities at Columbia University, and to accept this call demonstrated splendid confidence in it on the part of its founder. This confidence cannot possibly prove mistaken and the work already accomplished, although under great limitations, is

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sure to be one of the landmarks in the history of education.

This work is all particularly opportune just at the present time when the legitimate drama, which had held its own for two thousand years as one of the culture forces of the world, is so impaired and threatened by the "movies," which appeal only to the eye and represent only an emasculated type of dramatization. It is, therefore, high time that the real psychological, moral, civic and religious value of the dramatic instinct should be adequately set forth. After these fifteen years of effort, first appealing to the children and the populace in a downtown foreign section of New York City, and now to students and teachers at Columbia University, the psychological moment seems to have fully come when the Children's Theatre should have, as the next step in its evolution, a material installation in a theatre fully equipped for the purpose, not specifically of training actors (though not entirely excluding this), but for developing the unique and neglected type of culture which the dramatic instinct, one of the

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most deep and fundamental in all human nature, needs. The Carnegie Institute of Technology at Pittsburgh has seen in part the great educational possibilities that are here utilized, and has built a magnificent theatre complete in all respects for teaching all the technique of theatre management, scenic painting, presentation, lighting, costuming, etc., with a rich library for this purpose. This should be supplemented by an institution which not only does this well but is guided fundamentally by the humanistic tendency to develop the dramatic instinct from early childhood up, chiefly for its cultural but also its professional aspects. That these can be combined, that the missing link between the dramatic instinct of children and the creative power of the dramatist, can be bridged, is now a matter of course. How long must America, with this solid psychological foundation already laid, wait for the adequate installation of a school of dramatic art, with an actual theatre, not large but ideally equipped, as its laboratory?

G. STANLEY HALL.

CLARK UNIVERSITY
July 10, 1917.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF THE CHILD AND HOW
DOES THE ADULT TRANSGRESS IN THE KING-
DOM?

WHENEVER I watch a group of children at play and see how universally all children constantly pretend to be some one else, I marvel that this life of "make believe" has been so little studied and so meagerly applied in the development of the child.

Your little daughter asks to be allowed to put up her hair and put down her skirt so that she may play the rôle of mother in her game of "keeping house." The little boy in your class asks for the loan of an Indian costume, for he wants to play big chief of his tribe setting out to vanquish the helpless white settlers. You give the little girl permission to put up her hair and you borrow the costume for the little boy, and then you dismiss the whole matter from your mind, for it is only child's play.

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Have you ever seriously considered that "in the child's world of dim sensation" play is all in all? "Making believe" is the gist of his whole life, and he cannot so much as take a walk except in character.

All children's plays are miniature attempts at reproducing social occupations, and in all the plays which he himself initiates the child does everything in character.

But this does not prove, as so many parents and teachers seem to think, that the child possesses a sort of dual nature, one nature adapted to work, another adapted to play, a kind of Jekyll and Hyde make-up. On the contrary, this universal gift of children to characterize shows that the tendencies from which play develops are not peculiar to play but these tendencies originate serious activities. It takes pretty much the same series of manipulations to make an apple pie as it does to make a sand pie, and in the beginnings of all the social occupations as well as the primary understanding of all the humanities of life may be best initi-

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ated in the child through wise coöperation with his desire to characterize.

Nature gave the child an instinct to help it in this game of characterization. It is called the creative or dramatic instinct, and we benighted elders, be we parents or teachers, really know very little about it because we constantly say to little children, "Now you have been playing long enough, you must begin to work." And the children look at us and do not know what we mean, because they really have been working every instant just as hard as they know how. They have been weighing "make-believe" butter and sugar in their pretend grocery stores and have been doing up innumerable packages for delivery. Some of the boys have even gone out in all the imagined snow and sleet to deliver the packages. The girls have washed and dressed the doll babies and have given them all their suppers before putting them to bed. Then all the dishes which they have used in playing house must be washed, and the room must be tidied, and very often there is the husband's dinner to cook and serve if the children's

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mother is one who does all her own housework, for the life of the household is very often the child's material for drama. With this material the child is making a constant adjustment of means to end. He is using "make believe" as a motive power, and in teaching himself to do chores in the grocery, to wash dishes in the house or to go abroad and fight Indians he is weaving an enchantment over work because he is laboring in his own Godgiven kingdom.

Now when we interrupt in the child's business of life and say "This is only child's play; it is time to get to serious work" we miss the greatest opportunity that will ever come our way to assist the child to do what he is going to be obliged to do in his later life, namely, to adjust his environment to his needs. He is always doing this in his self-initiated play, yet we seldom realize that what we call the serious work of life is not a particle more serious for us than is this work of play for the child.

Robert Louis Stevenson better than any other educator has told us why it is that we adults are so incapable of helping the child to use his



A Scene from "Buried Treasure"

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native instincts as natural tools for learning. He puts it thus: "We grown people can tell ourselves a story, give and take strokes until the bucklers ring, ride far and fast, marry, fall and die; all the while sitting quietly by the fire or lying prone in bed. This is exactly what a child can not do, or does not do, at least when he can find anything else. He works all with lay figures and stage properties. When his story comes to the fighting, he must rise, get something by way of a sword, and have a set-to with a piece of furniture, until he is out of breath. When he comes to ride with the king's pardon he must bestride a chair, which he will so hurry and belabor and on which he will so furiously demean himself that the messenger will arrive, if not bloody with spurring, at least fiery red with haste. If his romance involves an accident upon a cliff, he must clamber in person about the chest of drawers and fall bodily upon the carpet before his imagination is satisfied. Lead soldiers, dolls, all toys, in short, are in the same category and answer the same end. Nothing can stagger a child's faith: he

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accepts the clumsiest substitutes and can swallow the most staring incongruities. The chair he has just been besieging as a castle or valiantly cutting to the ground as a dragon is taken away for the accommodation of a morning visitor, and he is nothing abashed; he can skirmish by the hour with a stationary coal scuttle; in the midst of the enchanted pleasure he can see, without sensible shock, the gardener soberly digging potatoes for the day's dinner. He can make abstraction of whatever does not fit into his fable; and he puts his eyes into his pocket, just as we hold our noses in an unsavory lane.

And so it is that although the ways of children cross with those of their elders in a hundred places daily, they never go in the same direction nor so much as lie in the same element. So may the telegraph wires intersect the line of the highroad, or so might a landscape painter or a bagman visit the same country, and yet move in different worlds.

Yet we elders know that the child's experience is so incomplete, he knows so little of the

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real world and real men. He is only at the experimental stage so that he is constantly seeking help. Here it is that "the ways of children cross with those of their elders in a hundred ways daily" and the children mutely suggest a parallel road and try their best to go along with us, but the grown-up continues along the crossroad, unheeding.

As a matter of fact, this failure on the part of the adult to accept the child's suggestion to enter his world of play is sadly comprehensible, for when he left this world many years ago and came into his own work-a-day world, he entered through a portal which bore some such inscription as this, "Let all who enter here leave their imaginations behind." Of course if he was studying to be an artist like Stevenson's landscape painter he was permitted to carry his imagination along with him into the world of work because, in that profession, imagination is an asset; but if he was destined to be only an ordinary person like the bagman, the training of his imagination was superfluous, and so it is very hard for him to throw himself

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back into a world from which he has so long been separated. The only faculty which could help him to accept the child's invitation to take the parallel road has been left to chance: untrained, uncultivated.

If only the bagman had the trained imagination of the poet and the painter we would not need associations for child study, for the trained imagination would suggest that "except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The greatest teacher that ever lived said that, and he was the greatest teacher because he possessed the greatest vision, the deepest sympathy, the keenest imagination. Christ presented all his great lessons in the form of parables because he knew that he could never reach the heart and soul of the people through preaching cold, bald facts.

He used the dramatic story for his preaching just as children use it in their play, because he realized the power of the dramatic instinct, and as a teacher he made the highest use of this instinct that the world has ever known.

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“Except ye be converted and become as little children.” Could any precept be more clear? Yet how few of us know how to put it into practice! How poorly the servant has followed the master! Our dulled imaginations have lost the power to “make believe,” and in the child’s world of dramatic play we see only what we believe to be a fertile field for pedagogy; so we enter in and really believe that we are developing the child through play when we show him how to play or in other words, when we show him the way that *we* would play the game or the way that *we* would act the character.

The child may be endowed with the vision of the artist and when he seeks our help we would limit his vision to the near horizon of the bagman.

This is where the adult transgresses in the kingdom!

CHAPTER II

HOW CAN THE PARENT AND THE TEACHER ENTER WITH THE LITTLE CHILD INTO HIS KINGDOM?

THE constantly increasing number of Mothers' Clubs, Parents' Leagues and Associations for Child Study attest the need that we adults who have lost the power to make believe feel for worthy entrance into the child's kingdom. Such organizations are a comparatively new departure in the history of education, and they are working along the right lines because they have their inception in the realization that mind is essentially a process of growth and not a fixed thing. According to the older view, mind was mind and that is all there was about it. The child mind and the adult mind was understood to be just the same, only there might be a difference of amount; but a boy was a little man and his mind was a little mind, but just the same as the adult mind in everything but size.

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The thing which more than any other has served to bring about some popular understanding of the fallacy of this older view has been the Children's Courts. Until quite recently children were condemned for crimes in the same courts of justice as adults, and children adjudged guilty of adult crimes were placed alongside of hardened criminals. In nine cases out of ten they became criminals in the end.

Finally some wise person who must have been enjoying at least a probationary visit in the kingdom of "make believe" realized that many children's crimes were enacted in character. The child who stole was a pirate king in his own eyes, and the leader of the gang who really went so far as to shoot off a real pistol was a hero recognized by his followers.

We adults do not bother about the pirate king or the gang leader hero so long as their operations are limited to what we call "only child's play," but we promptly demand their punishment if their untrained imaginations become so well developed that the "make believe" pirate actually steals and the "pretend" hero really

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shoots and so both break the rules of our adult social code. Here is where we protest and demand the punishment of the offenders. These little people must positively not ring down their final curtain on a realistic drama.

This is all perfectly true and perfectly trite, and you may quote highest authority for your ruling, "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not take anything which is thy neighbor's." The child has probably learned all this in his Sunday School, but he is at a loss to see what it all has to do with the "pirate king."

The one who established the Children's Courts must have known a great many things about the dramatic instinct of boys and girls, for he made the connection between the "pirate king" and the boy who stole the guarded treasure from out the stately mansion. Then he did another thing even more important when he established the Probationary System out of which grew The Big Brother and The Big Sister Movement. He saw that the creative instinct of childhood could be turned to constructive uses instead of to destructive abuses. He saw

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that the boy who had enough initiative to be the leader of the "gang" could just as well learn to be a fine leader of boys' clubs, and that the girl who had, according to the accepted rules, "gone wrong" was the girl whose creative instinct had been inhibited or suppressed in childhood, instead of being intelligently directed. Her creative instinct had got the wrong twist at the right time, because early childhood is the right time at which to begin to train the creative instinct.

We should begin our training just as soon as the child begins to characterize. In reply to the question which I have been asked frequently "How early does the child begin to pretend he is some one else?" I have frequently seen two-year-old babies make believe to be kittens, dogs and horses. Once I knew a very lethargic baby who could be induced to walk only if he might pretend he was a pony trotting. The entire family of adults came into this baby's world of pretend in order to drive the pony.

Somehow little children make believe to be animals before they conceive of themselves as

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other humans, and they are constantly relating themselves to the personalities of animals. A few years ago a young mother who was staying at the same country house as myself came to me one evening quite distraught because she could not induce her young hopeful three-year-old to come into the house for his supper. She said that she hated to whip him, and she did not want to drag him. "What's the matter with him?" I asked. "Why won't he come?" "Because," she replied, "he says he is a cow and he *must* stay up in the meadow." "Tell him it is time to get milked and he had better come and get milked." "I thought of that," said she, "but to-night the cows were milked in the meadows and they are still there." So together we walked up to the meadow and there was Billy slowly ambling about on all fours, making believe to be chewing the cud. Suddenly I called out to him, "Billy, you are a horse! Come, hurry up to the stable and get your feed for supper." Instantly the child changed his gait to a lively canter, and he was down at the house in less time almost than it

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takes to tell the story. Of course his porridge was oats and his bread and butter was hay, and he had a fine appetite for both. His mother saw the force of educating the "play it is" instinct, because when Billy was five and his little sister was three years old, I saw the two children serve afternoon tea delightfully in their city home. With the exception of the boiling water the children got everything ready by themselves, while their mother was entertaining her guests. They carried in the tea table, the cakes, cups, napkins, etc., and they passed everything to the visitors. The mother had taught them all the ways of good service with doll dishes at make-believe tea parties, and I have seen many high-salaried maids serve tea less skillfully. Of course this mother will always remain a subject of the kingdom and she will always help her children to play themselves into the industrial harness which will fit them best.

Billy and his little sister are no different from any other children, because all children love work which is undertaken in the spirit of play.

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Dramatic play, or "make believe," is the natural way suggested by the child as his own inherited method of socializing facts. He will learn not only to perform the most irksome tasks but to develop a spirit of responsibility toward their continued performance, if the pretend instinct be rightly utilized in his training. Despite this fact, by conscientious parents the question is constantly posed, "If all forms of work are made to seem like play to children, how will it be with them later on when they are obliged to perform real work in life?" The reply to that is simple. Our attitude toward work depends entirely on the spirit in which our work is undertaken. We all know that a constant round of mere amusement becomes insufferably tiresome, whereas the work which we care for may be a great stimulant. It is not always possible to be doing the work we love best, for in every trade and profession there is a certain part of the work which we call drudgery. Therefore I think we must begin with very little children to develop a spirit of attack towards that part of work which we call drudg-



"A lesson in story form secures the jewel of attention"

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ery such as will lift it out of the plane of drudgery and into the plane of interest.

The child, in his world of fancy, is constantly developing the right spirit towards drudgery, and we, in our world of fact, are constantly undoing his work. We regard a game as something to play at and be finished with in play. The child regards a game as something to be connected with life.

An interesting example presented itself in an uptown kindergarten, a few weeks past, where the children were playing the game of farmer sowing seed. It is a ring game in which the boys and girls take hands and, circling around, all sing together:

“Thus the farmer sows his seeds,
Thus he stands and takes his ease,
Stamps his foot and claps his hands
And turns about to view his lands.”

At the termination of the last line one little lad dashed from out his place in the ring and began to sow imaginary seed all over the floor space inside of the large circle. The teacher said to him, “What are you doing, Harry? You

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must go back to your place in the ring.” Nothing abashed, Harry answered, “If all this land in the ring belongs to the farmers why can’t I plant my seed in the inside of the ring? The seed will be so crowded on the outside that nothing will grow, and I want my seed to come up.” The wise teacher replied, “Very well, you may plant yours that way and some other farmers may do the same if they like.” After the session the kindergartner told me that she had taught this game for two years and had never thought of telling the children to sow their imaginary seed anywhere except along the outer circumference of the circle.

To me this young teacher seemed a very hopeful subject for the kingdom because she immediately accepted the child’s suggestion and did not tell him to go back into the ring and play the game like the other children. She seemed to think intuitively that Harry was just a little ahead of the others in socializing the game or connecting it with the large world outside the classroom. I found another reason for the lad’s suggestion when I learned that the

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day of my visit to the kindergarten was Harry's second day in school and he had not yet become used to the repression of the class game, for it is certain that there is a great deal too much done in the usual kindergartens in showing children how to play, instead of directing their imaginations to developing new ways of playing the old games. It is probable that, in the beginning, several of the little "make believe" farmers had novel ideas about sowing their seed, and if they had been playing the game in the street instead of in the schoolrooms they might have advanced their ideas to one another. But after a few classroom repetitions the fluidity of the game became set and it resolved itself into a lesson. It was all done *for* the children and in consequence their interest was no longer attached. There was no reason for the little players to suggest any new stage business, although the natural feeling of a little child toward a dramatic game invariably suggests divers ways of acting out the characters. If the teacher does not know how to accept these suggestions and to help the child to elab-

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orate them, the child loses the social significance of the game and the game often becomes an irksome burden like many another lesson. To realize this it is only necessary to visit certain kindergartens where the children are "being played" but are not playing. I have seen the dramatic verities of "Little Miss Muffit" and "The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe" entirely obliterated by the teacher telling the child how to act the stories, and on the other hand I have seen the same immortal dramas well enough played for reproduction before sophisticated audiences when the children have been their own stage managers.

Lest any one suspect that the idea of using the self-initiative and interest of the child as the motive power in his development, is a *new* idea and consequently of questionable value, let him turn to John Locke's volume, "Some Thoughts Concerning Education," written about 1685, considerably more than two centuries ago. These "thoughts" were written by Locke in the form of letters to his friend, Mr. Edward Clarke, who was anxious for ad-

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vice about the bringing up of his son. Here I quote one paragraph verbatim:

“None of the things they are to learn should ever be made a burden to children, or impos’d on them as a Task. Whatever is so propos’d presently becomes irksome; the mind takes an aversion to it, though before it were a thing of delight or indifferency. Let a child but be ordered to whip his Top at a certain Time every day, whether he has or has not a Mind to it; let this but be requir’d of him as a Duty, wherein he must spend so many Hours Morning and Afternoon, and see whether he will not be weary of any Play at this rate.” . . . “Children have as much mind to shew that they are free, that their own good Actions come from themselves, that they are absolute and independent, as any of the proudest of you grown Men, think of them as you please.”

A dozen more excerpts from Locke’s “Thoughts” might here be quoted to prove the theory that the use of freedom and self-initiative in education is no new idea. The question is, how shall we give the old thought new applications in the education of the child from birth to five years of age?

One new application is the use of the dramatic or “make believe” instinct. It always works well with the young child because he understands it. It is his own way of learning, so

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he will be the best one to give us the cue for our own line of development in this field. The best way to get into the Kingdom of the little child is to observe his methods while he is enjoying perfect freedom in undirected play.

CHAPTER III

SHALL PARENT AND TEACHER BE SUBJECTS IN
THE KINGDOM OF THE OLDER CHILD, OR SHALL
THEY BE RULERS THEREIN?

THE native instincts of a human being are his tools for learning. Instincts all express themselves through the body; therefore, education which stifles bodily activities stifles instincts and so prevents the best natural method of learning.

All good instructors have begun to see that the instinctive spontaneity, liveliness and initiative of the child should all be used as aids in his *vocational* training. Teachers of carpentry know that a boy will never learn to plane a board evenly by having the teacher do the planing for him. Even with the help of the teacher's guiding hand the boy may spoil several boards before he even approximates perfection, but when his board is finished it will

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not only be the product of his own hand and brain, he will be interested to go on and learn how to make his board the basis of some box, or frame or other useful and beautiful thing which will be his very own in the right sense of possession.

In the same way it is a fine thing to see the just pride of a little girl who can carry to her home table a heaping plateful of golden brown biscuits which she has made and baked without help in the home kitchen after she has enjoyed long and individual practice in her school cooking class. After having copied the recipe placed upon the blackboard by her teacher, she has all by herself sifted the dry ingredients and mixed them with the liquid ones; she has rolled her dough and cut it into shape; she has buttered her pan and filled it ready for the oven, and she has tried out degrees of heat for just the correct golden-brown color for the finished product. Otherwise she could not have made her biscuits at home and without aid.

The need of vocational training as part of the school system came about through a reali-

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zation of the fact that children could not be expected to attach mental activity to manual work unless they were given the opportunity to actually practice the two activities coördinately under proper guidance. It is a simple proposition for any father to understand, that his boy may know all there is to be studied in books about a buzz saw, but unless under competent direction he has actual practice in the use of a buzz saw he will not only be awkward if he "monkeys" with it but he may do himself physical injury. In the same way any intelligent mother knows that her girl will never be able to cook, or sew, or sweep until she has gone through every process of learning how to do these things by doing them many times under the guidance of competent teachers.

Although it was not so in the beginning, there is now a fairly general acceptance of the idea that carpentry classes and shops are not attached to the schools in order to make of every lad a good carpenter, nor are cooking and sewing classes a part of the curriculum in order to make every girl a cook or a seamstress. Voca-

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tional work is part of the school curriculum because we are beginning to realize that the public school is the greatest fundamental agency for good in this or in any democratic country, and for that reason we want the knowledge which a child gets in school to be real, not verbal. We want education to furnish standards of judgment and comparison. We know that a boy who can make an article well with his own hands is a worthy judge of a good article and a better appreciator of all well-made things. We know that the girl who in school or at home has learned the fundamentals of cooking and of housework is the one who can best appreciate the value of good service as well as being the one who can best perform the service well herself.

The vast army of tax payers who support the public schools have begun to see that the establishment of vocational training as part of the school curriculum is at last succeeding in making facts carry over into acts. The value of it all is perfectly apparent to the father and mother when the boy makes the box and the

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girl makes the biscuits. The reproduction of either is something tangible which the parent can hold in his own hand and say, "My child made this."

There is for the parent nothing seemingly tangible about the boy's reproduction of a giant or the girl's reproduction of a fairy, yet in characterizing the giant the boy begins to realize the value of a force that is great and large and perhaps near to the hero, and the girl who "pretends" to be a fairy unconsciously characterizes the subconscious forces of nature that we all feel but cannot see. The parent cannot actually lay hold of these characterizations to say "My child made this and this," and so it is naturally difficult for him to realize that both the boy in making the giant and the girl in making the fairy do something more important to the progress of civilization than either does in making the box or the biscuits.

What the child really does in characterization is to carry facts into values, and that is a far longer stride ahead than to merely carry facts into acts. Creative energy and originality bur-

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row to the very roots of a child's soul when he recreates character, and as he advances in years he constantly craves help in his work of reproduction. Through this creative instinct within himself he seems to realize his godlike qualities. He wants to know the beginnings and the end of the soul that he must bring to life, and this is exactly what he should be helped to know if this God-given instinct is to be righteously developed for ultimate creative ability in all things.

The child must be allowed to plane his own board by apprehension and calculation and mix his own ingredients of good and evil all under direction of a competent instructor, before he is able to properly reproduce character.

It is more difficult to know how to help children to reproduce characters than it is to know how to help them to make boxes or biscuits. Many parents and teachers, in their homes and in their schools, are beginning to realize what a weapon of mighty power is this dramatic or "make believe" instinct if it is properly directed, and they want to learn how to use it

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skillfully, adroitly, conscientiously. There is a constantly growing realization that the way to develop the dramatic instinct must be learned, and teachers see that it cannot be learned through the study of mere theory.

My many years of experience in dealing with the actual operations of the dramatic or creative instinct of childhood have made me more and more skeptical concerning the increasing number of theories constantly advanced in genetic psychology. I believe that the best way to learn how children may grow through play is, not alone to watch children at play, but to learn how to play with children. There are always adult or "grown-up" parts in children's plays, whether the plays be finished literary products or spontaneously developed home or classroom plays, and there is no other way in which parent or teacher can so surely enter into the heart and soul of the child as by taking an actual part in the child's dramatic play. A mother who will learn how to become as a little child will soon see that the suggestion of an ideal reaches the heart and mind of her child directly and

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surely through the vicarious character because she will see that characters in plays are, for children, living personages. A mother or teacher who takes an actual part in dramatic play with children needs no reassurance of the truth that a good play can always teach children the reality of life through its reproduction.

Thus comes the question, "How can the teacher be trained to effect this reproduction in the most educational way, or, in other words, how can she help the child to bring to life the new character in a way that will best broaden his own character without any concern regarding the edification of an audience?" The good teacher understands that in using the child's dramatic instinct toward his development, she is not training the child to be an actor any more than is the teacher of manual work training the child to be a carpenter or the teacher of domestic science training the child to be a cook. In developing the child's emotions toward creative self-expression she is training him to be a worthy citizen. She appreciates that this is



Scene from "The Tinkle Man"

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a large order and that she needs help to accomplish it.

One of the questions that both mothers and teachers frequently ask is "Will a course of demonstration rehearsals given by one who has successfully produced plays with children suffice?" With a subject so vital as characterization, a method of teaching which deals so intimately with the heart and soul of childhood and youth, should a true teacher try to reproduce an exact copy of some one else's method of training, and struggle to fit that exact method to her particular group? Is this an advisable way even if the teacher is prepared to try out the same play as the one which is used by the demonstrator?

Fifteen years of experience in The Children's Educational Theatre producing plays with every type of child and adolescent: the exceptionally bright child, the retarded or backward child, the shy, bashful, retiring child; the clever, gifted, highly imaginative child: all this practical experience reënforces me in the certain belief that any teacher or parent who attempts to repro-

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duce the exact procedure of another begins by committing a fundamental error. I am also convinced that any director who assures a teacher that his or her exact method is the only possible one for educational ends, commits a still more flagrant error and immediately proclaims himself or herself no guide whatever toward helping others to induce characterization in children. This statement has the face value of an axiom when we remember that there exists no art so wholly and subtly individualistic as characterization.

Every group of children presents different problems and every child within the group presents an individual problem.

Self-expression is a talent of the soul—it is not a quality of the mind, and it needs far more careful, more wise, more individualistic training than any mental quality. No mere ordained ruler in the Kingdom, be he teacher or parent, can arbitrarily command the child to bring to life either the creation of the author's brain or the fabric of the child's own imagination. In this Kingdom we do not recognize any

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divine right of Kings but only the divine right of the child to the full possession of his own nature. Therefore in our Kingdom the teacher will work shoulder to shoulder with the child: comrade on his journeys into the Land of Make Believe; guiding, not coercing; establishing relations, not specializing personality; stimulating and encouraging in ways so wise and so tactful that the child is released from all sense of control or restriction, while his keen interest retains his unflagging attention to the subject in hand.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE KINGDOM THE CHILD CAN LEARN BEST
HOW TO KNOW HIMSELF BY BEING, FOR A TIME,
SOME ONE ELSE, BUT HE MUST CREATE, NOT
IMITATE HIS NEW CHARACTER.

THE question then which naturally arises, granting that the adult wishes to be a subject and not a mere dictator in the Kingdom, is: What shall the parent or teacher most intelligently study if he wishes to use dramatic play, not alone for recreation and entertainment, but for the great dual purpose to which dramatic play properly directed may always be applied, for character development in childhood and adolescence?

He should study the instincts which are at the root of all emotional life before he can ever hope to train these instincts to adequate expression. No study of pitch and inflection, of posture or of breath control, will suffice. These are all external aids which may be useful to the

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teacher in good season but none of them will take the place of the study of the instincts or emotions from which all true expression springs.

The theory most commonly held of the origin of instincts is that, in the dim past, some ancestor deliberately performed the action which gradually has become automatic in the species but the most progressive and intelligent scientists to-day assure us that the effects of heredity are not beyond our human control. A great many notions concerning the origin of instincts and the theories regarding transmitted habits, have been changed within the past century. The educator to-day need not be hopeless over what is seemingly the worst material for, as we study the instincts more and more intelligently we shall see that even the deepest seated emotions or instincts are subject to the modifying influences of ideas. The conditions of good and evil are not predetermined in the cell of some remote ancestry!

It is largely a matter of how instinct is trained which determines whether the child shall

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become a good or bad citizen of the community.

From what I am able to observe in the usual direction of children in plays, many teachers seem to believe, as the older biologists taught, that instincts *are* invariable from generation to generation and individual to individual. This simply means that such teachers have made no salient or true study of the instincts or they would see that exactly the reverse is true. The greatest possibilities of individual powers of expression have their inception in the instincts or emotions and thus the greatest hope of character building through intelligent training of the instincts.

Emerson says, "If a single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts and there abide, the large world will come round to him." I hope not to be accused of heresy if, for mothers and teachers I add one vitally important word to that quotation and say thus: "If a man plant himself indomitably on his *trained* instincts and there abide, the large world will come round to him," and I am quite certain that Emerson him-

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self interpreting his thought for society at large would have been content with this interpolation, for he constantly shows us, in all that he has written and in all that he has lived, that many instincts need transformation instead of satisfaction.

Here we touch upon the crucial fundamental need in our educational system to-day; to transform not merely to transmit. We need to do with children what Burbank has done with flowers. It can be done with humans by dealing with the flower of childhood's soul, these primal instincts which come to us often "trailing clouds of glory from God who is our home"; but we need to begin our work before "shades of the prison house have begun to close" for then, it will be alas, too late.

I feel certain that both parents and teachers would be far more eager than they are at present, to study the instincts of the children in their care if they were once assured that morality has its birth and its being in instinctive emotional attitudes and for this reason it is necessary to bring the instinctive act to the plane of

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consciousness. The fond parent often exclaims, "My child does thus and so instinctively and so needs no training along that line." This is an absolute error for instinct may be trained as readily as any mental process only it cannot be trained in the same way. We must not lay down hard and fast rules for emotional expression and then try to fit every child to these rules. Educators in general have not fully awakened to the fact that, from its most fundamental phases the illuminating process of self-expression must be absolutely individual.

I say illuminating process of self-expression advisedly because there is for the individual nothing in the world so illuminating as self-expression. The great book has said it over and over again, "Know thyself," "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he," etc.

Now the child and the adolescent can learn best how to know himself by being, for a time, some one else. This sounds like a paradox and it is true, for any one who has studied the dramatic instinct and its relation to the life of childhood knows that this game of "make believe"

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is youth's natural method of trying to gain experience in life. It is a sort of instinctive clutch which the child makes in order to keep himself from drowning in a deep unfathomable sea of unrelated facts. He cannot possibly relate all these new ideas to his own limited experience so he relates them to the experiences of his soul companions, the creatures of his world of "make believe," and this game of imagination is such a good method that the children have kept on playing it through the centuries, despite all the legions of educators that have lined up to outwit it.

Thus we see that the child who refuses to have his dramatic instinct constantly repressed does learn in spite of us, but the same child will learn far more surely, more quickly and more genially if we coöperate with this instinct in him. It is certain that every parent and every teacher would coöperate in the right development of childhood's dramatic instinct if its potentiality was universally understood and recognized.

Until the inception of the Children's Educa-

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tional Theatre fifteen years ago, I doubt that the phrase, "The Dramatic Instinct in Education," was ever enunciated. I cannot find mention of it thus used, in any volume on pedagogy in our own language nor in the German, French or Italian. Not but what children and young people have from time immemorial taken part in dramas and have gained much therefrom, but educators did not work in this affording field because they did not see its possibilities. They did not know that dramatic play could generate and develop the most valuable of all traits for character making: namely, the discovery of the child by himself.

In the gradual development of The Children's Educational Theatre we have found that, in a play the child unconsciously reacts to his imaginary environment in all its minute details. If properly induced and sufficiently long sustained the imaginary environment has the power to alter inflection, pronunciation and posture. We shall see a very rudimentary illustration of this if we watch a group of children playing school at recess period in any playground. The child



The Indians in "Snow White and Peter Pan" given at Vineland

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playing teacher completely changes her intonation and phraseology to represent the way her teacher talks. The child uses the same gestures to emphasize her words that her teacher uses. This is the lowest, most primary use to which the dramatic instinct can be put: imitation. We should not cavil with the child's use of imitation to help himself when unaided, towards characterization because the instinct of imitation is one of the earliest instincts of the child and of the race. We should however very strenuously cavil with any parents' or teachers' use of a normal child's dramatic instinct to purely imitative ends because a teacher who does so use this creative instinct is not really helping the child and is missing the great opportunity which her dramatized lesson or her play, presents.

Two years ago at the Vineland Training School I enjoyed the opportunity of seeing a play with a cast of sixty-five, most beautifully produced. The play was put together by the man and woman who direct all dramatic work at this institution and a good many musical num-

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bers were introduced because it has been found that defectives are very fond of music. Although there were many grown men and women in the cast of the play, no player was older than eleven years mentally. During the three long acts of the play not a single player missed a cue and all ran along as smoothly as in any professional performance, indeed I have seldom seen an amateur performance in which the players were so well trained. The large audience was intensely interested and I was told by the directors that the play held interest for the cast throughout its entire period of rehearsal and that it afforded great joy to all the inmates of the institution. The players had all been most carefully and most sympathetically trained by their splendid teachers in the purely imitative method, the only method possible with sub-normals or defectives. The woman director had herself studied a characterization of every female rôle in the play and slowly and patiently she had rehearsed her pupils in the words and gestures, the exits and entrances which she gave them as model for

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copy. The man director had done the same thing with the male rôles and all this wonderful training was fully apparent in the smooth performance.

In all this admirable use of the instinct of imitation there was no transformation of instinct; no attempt to appeal to the creative instinct because defectives possess no creative instinct. That is why they are defectives. The directors of dramatic play at Vineland do not attempt to induce creative characterization because, having made a study of the instincts, they know it cannot be done; but they have made a study of the very best method of training the instinct of imitation and by training this instinct they effect splendid results with defectives.

There is one positive axiom which may be enunciated for the director of dramatic play dealing with normal children and adolescents. It is the axiom which, in different form is reiterated in every chapter of this book because it is the only golden key, the only "open sesame" to the Kingdom of the child. *Never appeal to the instinct of imitation.* The temptation to do

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so will assail you on every hand and it will require much self control to keep this axiom in mind and to adopt it in practice because clever children are such wonderful mimics. We have an excellent example each year in New York of this power of imitation, when a group of professional children act, for some benefit, a play which has had a long and successful run in a prominent theatre. One year the little ones acted "Jimmie Valentine," another year "Pomander Walk" and another year "Daddy Long Legs," and I am told that it is marvelous to see and hear the exact reproduction, in gesture, intonation and inflection, which the children give of the original adult cast. But however cute and clever it may seem it is all a mere use for the edification of an audience, of this instinct of imitation, and a long experience has shown that, with the normal child no transformation will occur through the use of this instinct.

Therefore, let no young mother or teacher faithfully study and fit an assumed character to herself and then try to fit the same pattern

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to the child. She surely would not try to fit her size seven glove to the hand of a ten-year-old. The misfit would at once be apparent. It is so easy to measure the hand, so hard to measure the soul, and I feel that not all of us are as yet fully persuaded that éxpression and characterization are purely things of the soul.

CHAPTER V

IN EVERY CHILD WITHIN THE KINGDOM SLUMBERS THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE OF THE RACE AND WE, AS EDUCATORS, MUST ENDOW THE NEW SPIRITUAL LIVES WITH FORM AND SUBSTANCE.

IN inducing self expression through characterization, the greatest individual development is secured by helping the pupil to enact a variety of characters in every play in which he takes part. However greatly the performance may be perfected by repetition the player must have the opportunity to develop a new character just as soon as he has completely assimilated the values of the character already assumed, if the work of characterization is to be of truly educative worth.

Being fully persuaded, through long experience in The Children's Educational Theatre that children can best study motives, possibilities and purposes active in human nature through the medium of characters in plays, we



A Scene from "The Magic Robe"

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encourage our young folks to try on a whole line of samples of characters. In our dramatized version of "The Magic Robe," a boy may play the "King" one week, "Habakkuk" the basket weaver another week and "Omar" the son of Gandolin another week if he happens to have the time. Two years ago, during our third revival of "The Little Princess" the story of Sara Crewe, one girl of fourteen played a party child, then she played Lavinia the disagreeable girl of the school, then Ermengarde the cheerful, good natured girl, and all the time this child's whole heart and soul were set on playing Sara Crewe. When I say the girl's whole heart and soul were rife with desire to try on the fascinating garments of the rich soul of Sara Crewe this is not the slightest exaggeration, for every child in the large cast of the play when we were working together in the dressing room would say to me, "Ida is just longing to play Sara Crewe. Her mother thinks she can and her father thinks she can and all of us girls think she can."

All of these opinions were very flattering to

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our belief in the universal possibility of inducing creative interpretation even in the most unexpressive child for there never existed a girl so totally opposite in character and environment to Sara Crewe as was this little Ida. One of her physical disqualifications was the absence of a prominent front tooth, but she assured us that, if she could be certain of being given a chance to play Sara her papa would "take" her a new tooth. We decided that she must be given the chance to play this character. Then followed the long hours of patient rehearsal and the constant thought on the part of the director to suggest every possible stimulus to induce the imaginative faculty of the child, whose only playground had been the street and whose home had been a crowded tenement, to bridge the gap which existed between the life and training of Mrs. Burnett's loveliest young heroine and the lack of training and advantage which existed in the life of our young aspirant to the part. Much had already been accomplished to aid the child's characterization through her interpretation of the parts of three

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children in Miss Minchin's school because the creation of each vicarious life broadens the sympathies and develops the humanities to such an extent that it becomes easier for the child to visualize each succeeding new life.

It would take many technical chapters to describe the action and reaction of the various stimuli used to further the child's dramatic instinct towards enabling her to live, for the time being, a life totally opposite in all its essentials to her own life. Although the child commenced rehearsing in February she did not arrive at a performance until the month of May and then she had only one performance of the part of Sara. Perhaps as parents, teachers and directors of dramatic play my readers will ask, "Was all this time and effort worth while?" Experience of years enables me to assure any doubtful ones that all the months of training represented time wholly and totally well spent and no words of mine would be needed as reassurance could my readers have seen this one performance of Sara Crewe by this child who was entirely lacking in what is commonly termed dramatic talent,

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who had no physical qualifications for the title part of the play and who, I am absolutely safe in saying, would never have been chosen by any teacher to play a leading rôle even in a dramatized lesson in a classroom. What was it then that recommended the girl to us and that encouraged us to work so many long and arduous hours to prepare her for only one performance? From a practical side there was no need for her to play because we had already prepared five other Sara Crewes that same season, any one of whom would have danced with delight at the prospect of one extra performance.

The thing which made it all worth while and which constantly stimulated us in our determination to bring the child to performance, was her own overwhelming desire to live, if only for a few brief hours, the ample life of Sara Crewe. We knew that the larger life of the heroine of the play had been strangled, checked and repressed in the everyday existence of this little child who longed for a respite from being her own narrow little self, so we worked with her along the line of her desire and she gave a per-

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formance which was considered charming, by our audience of almost one thousand persons. She was not an ideal Sara Crewe by any means. Indeed, she was not as good in the part as a dozen other Saras we have trained, but the point here made by us as educators is: what did the creative characterization of this type, totally opposite to her own life and environment, accomplish for Ida and could a like transformation have been effected in this child through any other form of instruction?

I am certain it could not and for the very apparent reason that no other method presents the teacher, from its inception, with her greatest asset, this jewel of voluntary attention. All normal children have so great an interest in creative characterization that their power of attending to the requirements of the new character brings something into consciousness which would otherwise remain outside. We are all aware that there is constantly an indefinite throng of stimuli trying to force themselves into consciousness which never come within its gates because, the mind not attending to them,

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no mental activity is brought to bear upon them. In dramatic play where, for the child, each character represents a living personage, there is a straightforward road from mind to the object, direct through connection with life itself. Ida's intense desire to live for a time the life of Sara Crewe was due to her great admiration of this young heroine's personality. She liked to think of herself as Sara; beautiful, beloved by all the other children in the school, sympathetic and helpful with the younger pupils, courageous and cheerful even amongst the rats in the garret and sturdily refusing to be discouraged by the discomforts of cold and hunger. She covered with her one thin blanket the little monkey who strayed into her garret window on a snowy night because, as she told her friend Ermengarde, she was not born in a tropical forest and could stand cold better than the little animal she meant to befriend.

This vital, beautiful, altogether charming girl Sara Crewe deeply attracted the rather dull and uninteresting child, Ida. We could never have interested this child in courage, beauty,

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sympathy for others, as mere abstract qualities. Nothing but the child's own interest in impersonating the heroine of her choice could have held Ida through one entire school year to an analysis of these qualities, because this is exactly what Ida had to accomplish in working out the verities of Sara's character. Moreover, these verities had to take deep root in her heart and soul to enable her to give any worthy presentation of them. Yet it was not the qualities that attracted Ida, but the child in the play who possessed these qualities.

Present good and bad as abstract qualities to Ida or to any other child, and no amount of explanation about qualities in general is of any avail, because the child's attention, the one condition of learning which cannot be dispensed with, is never secured for an abstract presentation. Consider with any child the character of Sara Crewe as a sympathetic and lovable child, or the character of Lavinia in the same play as a spiteful, revengeful girl, and you immediately have the child's mind working upon the subject. That is attention. That the child is non-atten-

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tive to the abstract proposition merely means that there is no connection between his mind and the subject, in which case teacher and pupil might as well live in different worlds so far as any educational relation between them is concerned.

An educational kinship can always be established between teacher and pupil through the agency of the vicarious character in a play or in a game. Even the most backward child can become the spiritual relative of her teacher if only the teacher desires to claim kinship.

In a revival of "The Little Princess" we worked one year with an entire group of forty backward or retarded children helping them to play the parts which we call party children or the children in Miss Minchin's school whom Sara invites to her birthday party. These children were in a segregated group in school, all of them having failed of promotion two terms and one girl in the group had failed three terms. Unpromising material this would seem, for a play. And so it was in the beginning, when the forty little girls seemed almost lifeless, so dif-

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ficult was it to awaken them to any responsiveness to their imaginary environment.

The first thing that aroused in them any genuine and enthusiastic response was a very large doll and her sumptuous wardrobe of gowns and hats, a birthday gift to Sara from her papa and consequently an important property in the play. This doll the children handle; they talk about her clothes, etc. After they became well acquainted with the doll and her various accouterments, this group of retarded children began to evince a heightened regard for Sara, her possessor. Then their interest extended to Ermengarde and to Becky, the little scullery maid whom Sara also invites to her party. Then the children began to take notice of Miss Amelia the young teacher in the school and thus gradually they added to their list of acquaintances quite a group of new people. At the fifth rehearsal the wonderful thing happened; these hitherto dull, unresponsive children really came to imagine that they were Sara's friends invited by her to her birthday party at Miss Minchin's private school in London. At this re-

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hearsal they came to a part in the first act where one girl plays the piano and all the girls at the party dance a waltz.

At first the children began to waltz around perfunctorily and rather sadly, dropping their characterizations in order to count their steps, all sense of rhythm seeming to be desiccated in them. However, such is the magic of the vicarious character that it did not take long to make the children realize that being guests at Sara's party, it was a poor compliment to her for them to look sad and doleful. When once they fully realized this all of them danced quite gayly. All with the exception of one little girl Dora, who stood shyly in a corner, alone. When the director said to her, "Choose a partner, Dora, and waltz," she crept up to him and said, "I can't dance, I tried often but I can't." Then two large tears splashed upon her apron as she asked, "If I don't dance will I be put out of the party?" Evidently Dora had been "put out" wherever she had tried to enter for she seemed almost resigned to this fate and was genuinely surprised when she received the reply, "No, I

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don't think you will be put out. Perhaps there is something else you can do at the party while the others are dancing. Can you think of anything else you can do?" Dora knit her brows and pondered very carefully for a long while, when suddenly her eyes brightened and she gave a spontaneous start of joy. "I know what," said she, "I can stand by the piano and turn over the leaves of the music for the girl who plays the piano." "That's fine," said the stage director, "now go and do it." Whereupon Dora gleefully skipped across the stage, took her stand beside the piano and faithfully carried out her self-appointed task. She had *created* a part in the play and as rehearsals progressed she added little touches to her rôle, coming to her rehearsal sufficiently early to see that the music was in place and to crease the corners of the sheets so that she might turn the pages handily. Throughout the long run of the play she never lost her characterization as a party child and before the season was over she waltzed as merrily as any of the other children at the "make believe" party.

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And now I may tell my readers that Dora was the girl who had been "left back" three times. More retarded, more backward in school than any of the forty girls and still, my story has a happy ending, for Dora was promoted for the first time in three years, at the end of the term when she created her part in "The Little Princess."

Through the dessication of the imaginative faculty of the dull and backward child the intellect gradually becomes barren, colorless and finally inert. Once direct the imagination so that the vague pictures of the mind and soul become tangible and take form and place in the environment the soul will automatically make connection with the mind and the result will show in every lesson in the school and in the home.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE FOREIGN-BORN CHILD IS BROUGHT INTO THE KINGDOM AND REMAINS FOREVER AFTER A LOYAL SUBJECT THEREIN.

THIS development and discipline of the imaginative faculty is a more vitally important part of the educational system for the children of to-day than it was for the children of our Colonial forbears. It is, for the child, not only timely but imperative if we aim to give him, not illusion but merely that mental and spiritual horizon which throws the flat and prosaic into their proper perspective. The methods of the little red school-house of past generations often permitted the child to discover, through his own experience, a desirable connection between prophecy and fact, between vision and task. The universal use of mechanical appliances to-day, while perhaps excellent for the saving of labor, is absolutely fatal to the exercise of imagination. Everything being ready

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at hand for this press-the-button generation, our only hope of salvation in education lies in making the right appeal to the imagination of childhood, since it is the only faculty which can preserve an honest balance between realism and ideality.

The Colonial dame who spun flax at her home-made wheel had far broader scope for the development of her imagination in her daily work than has the girl who feeds linings into an electric sewing machine and the men who were obliged to build their own homes before they could live in them, were compelled to use imagination for the provision of the very necessities of life. When no mechanical devices are ready at hand, people absolutely must have initiative and, in some measure, must discover, create and adapt. The highest degree of so-called modern civilization seems to deaden any exercise of imagination and consequently any resulting resourcefulness. The accumulated facts of past generations are put at the disposition of the child before his perception is trained or his mind images made clear and workable.

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The *word* is given him before the *thought*, and, as will always happen with this method, the word becomes a substitute for the thought.

A worse evil results from this method of training to-day than could have resulted from the employment of a like method in the little red schoolhouse, because the educator of past generations of children in America did not meet the constant need of fusing together the heterogeneous elements of the "melting pot." Many teachers of masses of boys and girls in our public schools to-day begin their work with children coming from homes in which the language of our country is not spoken and our customs and laws are but vaguely apprehended. When people are suddenly transplanted from a government of inherited monarchy to one of developed democracy it is no easy thing to teach them the true meaning of liberty and not have it confused with license. It is absolutely imperative to get the true notion of democracy thoroughly fixed in the mind and soul of the immigrant child because he is the only one who can ever really teach the foreign-born parent.

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It is, therefore, doubly necessary that the immigrant child learn aright, in the very beginning, the standards of our government and of the men who as heroes and patriots have upheld these standards. The dramatic instinct must constantly be called upon and brought into play to help this child to visualize people and events which through mere monotonous recitation, mean less than nothing to him. Personally I was helped many years ago to realize the total confusion which exists in the foreign child's mind by hearing a conversation which took place in the Educational Alliance when a lad of fourteen came with his father and six little brothers and sisters to be entered in the Hebrew Class connected with the religious school of the institution. The family had, at that time, been but three weeks in the country. The father explained to the instructor in charge that the lad was quite advanced as he had received good instruction in Russia. The teacher then handed the boy a Hebrew book and told him to read aloud. The pages of all Hebrew books begin and run from right to left, the lines on each

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page beginning at the right and running to the left instead of from left to right as in an English book. The lad took the book and opening it at the right he began at the last page to read from left to right. Naturally this made no sense and the teacher said to the father, "Why, the boy does not know Hebrew, he even turns the book the wrong way." The lad looked up questioningly and promptly said, "I know it in Russia but I thought everything was the other way in this country." This is true, not only of the Russian Jewish immigrant, for we all know that the Irish immigrant still believes that money can be literally picked up in the streets in America and the Italian still approaches our shores convinced that here he can readily earn enough in two years to enable him to return to his own country and live at ease for the remainder of his life.

When children come to us saturated with such traditions, when they believe, as so many of them do, that the chief difference between our American government and the one they have abandoned is the fact that here any one may

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call the chief executive of the country a liar, if he wants to and he will not be imprisoned for it, there is much need of special preparation for citizenship in the school life of such a child. The mere facts of our short history and the learning of our civic laws will not mean anything to the foreign-born child unless he appreciates the character of the men who have made our history and our laws.

In the instruction of immigrant children I have found that the dramatic method is a certain and an interesting way to insure such appreciation. Let me offer a concrete example of precisely what I mean.

When I was working at The Educational Alliance, New York City, there existed in the building a department for the instruction in English of immigrant children, prior to their admission to the public school. While engaged in arranging a programme to be given on the occasion of Lincoln's Birthday one of the teachers asked my help with a boy of fifteen who had been chosen to recite Lincoln's address at the dedication of the cemetery on the battlefield of

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Gettysburg. The teacher said to me when she consigned the lad to my care, "It is very hard for him to give expression to the words because, you see, he has had so little time at school that he knows very little about the rules of grammar. I doubt whether he knows an adverb from a noun." I did not tell her that I was in no way troubled by his lack of knowledge in this direction; but after talking with the boy for ten minutes I found that he knew practically nothing whatever about the character of Abraham Lincoln or the effect of his personality upon his time, although he could tell me at once the *date* of Lincoln's birth and death and all the dates of the important battles of the Civil War. He recited Lincoln's epoch-making speech in exactly the same way as he recited these dates, and he knew every word of the speech "by heart."

Our first lesson together was spent in recounting anecdotes of Lincoln's boyhood and youth, in which I found the Russian lad greatly interested and before our second meeting he had voluntarily secured a book on "The Life of

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Abraham Lincoln" at the public library; so that as early as our second lesson we were prepared to look into the meaning of the great man's words and the reasons for his having uttered them. Gradually, as the reason of the words became clear, the boy was seized with a new idea; his eyes glowed, his shoulders became erect, and his head was thrown back with determined action as he said, "I'll take off for Abraham Lincoln and say the speech like as if I was him." "That's just the right way," said I, "begin."

No written description that meager print affords can place before the mind any adequate idea of the passionate, patriotic fire with which that immigrant lad delivered the oration on the appointed occasion. After his dramatic instinct had given his imagination the clue of actually becoming, for the time, the hero whose thought he was chosen to expound, there was but little left for me to do except for a suggestion here and there. I can see him now as he first came to me, a rather stooping, round-shouldered lad with his worn coat tightly buttoned across his chest. As he began to swell

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with pride in his self-suggested characterization of Lincoln, two insecure buttons burst their holdings on his coat front and flew across the room. Then, with a splendid, natural gesture indicative of impatience at all hampering physical restraint, he grandly unfastened the third and last button as he reverently uttered the phrase, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

I watched the effect of the boy's characterization upon seven hundred men and women in the auditorium, mostly parents of the children, and I saw that they were profoundly touched by the expression of intense feeling which colored the words with purpose and meaning. The simplicity and nobility of the immigrant boy's rendition brought tears to many eyes and the teacher who had brought the boy to me said that she wished this remarkable rendition might be permanently preserved in a phonograph record to show others what sincere feeling for our American hero could exist in the heart of a little boy who had been but a few months in

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our country. Yet in the end the boy had no better knowledge of nouns, verbs or adverbs than when we began our work together. That boy did not need the "words and grammar" of literature, he wanted the *life* of the author's revelations; and in this he is no different from any other child, for every child inherits this divine Kingdom of Imagination and every child wants thoughts instead of words; but as a rule he is served a mess of pottage in lieu of his divine birthright.

However, there is true reason to believe that the present day child is slowly but surely coming into his heritage for the dramatized lesson "acted out" by the child was an unknown thing a decade ago, and to-day many such lessons may be seen, not alone in private schools where there is time and means for individual instruction, but in the large classes of the public schools, teachers are encouraged to realize that something more than "facts and facts alone are wanted in life" if the child is to be developed into a happy and useful citizen. Teachers of foreign-born children and of children in whose

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homes English is not spoken, assure me that there is no other method whereby they can evaluate the events of American history and civics. In a New York neighborhood peopled almost exclusively by Italians I witnessed not long since, a beautifully conducted lesson on the signing of the Declaration of Independence. A well dramatized version of the episode had been made by the class teacher with the aid of suggestions by the pupils. As should always be done in such dramatic lessons, the entire classroom was used to depict the scene of action and every boy and girl in the class of sixty took part in the play. Simple properties such as flags, rolls of parchment and newspapers were used by the young players to give more graphic semblance to the effect. Scene first showed the colonists before Faneuil Hall. Scene second portrayed the calling of the convention. Scene third was placed at the second day of the convention. During this scene an adjournment was taken when the delegates, represented by various children in the class, discussed amongst themselves the reasons for signing and not sign-

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ing, and a decision was finally taken to return home in order to give the important matter the intelligent consideration it merited. During scene four all the children in the class represented the colonists at their homes reading in the newspapers of what had been done at the congress and discussing various phases pro and con. Scene five portrayed another meeting of the congress and a reading of the document "The Declaration of Independence"; finally a signing of the declaration by the various colonists whose names appear on the original document; the little drama ending with a pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

The interest in this lesson was intense throughout its entire progress and while every young player was adequate the boy who played the difficult rôle of Thomas Jefferson was especially good. When congratulating him upon his characterization I asked him how long he had been in this country. "Three years," he replied. "Did you learn all you know about Jefferson in your history lessons?" I asked. "Oh, no," said he, "there isn't so much in our school

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books about him, but the fellers in the street said I would not be good to show for Jefferson 'cause I was a Dago, so I thought I'd just show 'em." "What did you do then?" I asked. "I got busy with the books from the library," he answered, "and I read so much about Thomas Jefferson that the Stars and Stripes nor the harps neither haven't got anything on me."

The Italian boy was right. It would have been hard for an American born lad of the same age and coming from the same sort of home to have given a better interpretation of Jefferson than was given by this little Sicilian lad.

This use of the dramatic instinct which instills into the hearts of these young Americans in the making, a fervent, admiring love of our national heroes is absolutely necessary if we would make of them patriotic citizens of their adopted country. The Goddess of Liberty should be a revered ruler in the Kingdom of these embryo citizens and they can readily be taught, in dramatic play and pageant, to appreciate how truly she illumines their lives with the light from her great beneficent torch.

CHAPTER VII

LEARNING TO READ IS NEVER DULL AND TIRESOME
WHEN THE SCHOOLROOM IS A PART OF THE
KINGDOM.

IT is not alone with the foreign born child, who has but a rudimentary knowledge of our language, that we are spending too much time in the schools, on the mere mechanics of reading. We deprive every child of his divine right to a place in the Kingdom when we fail to use his imaginative faculty as our greatest help in teaching him to read. The modern primers and grade readers now fairly generally in use in the schools should be of great service in suggesting to us, through their text, various ways in which to help the child to visualize the story and to create atmosphere for it.

Many of the good primers and first and second grade readers now published recognize the fact that a child's vocabulary must follow

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his natural interests in his pets, his toys, his games, his playmates, his family ties and all his relations with industrial and civic life. These primers contain stories which appeal to the child's self activity in such a way that he may, through them, express himself naturally. A child always delights in finding the children of his reader living over his own experiences and this sense of delight in the story should always be the teacher's first aid in her reading periods. Too much time devoted in the beginning to the mere mechanics of reading will serve to make the most charming little story seem dull and profitless to teacher and pupil alike. The intelligent teacher struggling with a roomful of sleepy, lethargic children soon realizes that much reiterated instruction concerning consonants and vowels falls upon deaf ears and fails utterly to awaken any interest in the child. The same teacher has also become convinced that it is a waste of time to explain a list of words for which children have no use in the expression of their thoughts. Having reached these conclusions she sees that the one absolutely effective

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method is to allow the child's interest to reveal to him his immediate need of a word for developing the story, for when a word is revealed to answer a child's need that word will remain with him and will naturally fit into his vocabulary for future use.

Through the utter futility of the old type of reader with its stupid laws about the sacredness of commas, semicolons and periods, the child is slowly but bravely fighting his valiant way back to natural creative expression and the many new dramatic readers ought to be of incalculable service in helping the teacher to train the child to read aloud in a way that will develop himself and interest his hearers.

However, this dramatic reader, placed in the hands of one who does not know how to use it, has no greatly increased value over the old type. The teacher who has never drunk from that inexhaustible well of imagination which springs within the Kingdom of the child is very apt to regard the dramatic reader as an encumbrance and indeed to regard all dramatization applied to the regular school curriculum as something

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which is superimposed in order to add an artificial interest to subject matter which might otherwise be uninteresting. She cannot seem to appreciate that dramatization is a thing which engages the whole child, a thing which enables him to grasp a situation mentally and emotionally, a thing which combines perception and volition, which assists memory, and which helps the child to think, as nothing else can.

A concrete example comes to my mind in the case of a teacher who was an ardent opponent of dramatics in classroom work and who complained to me that she was obliged to use a dramatic reader in her first grade class. She felt that no improvement took place in the children's reading through the use of this book. She contended that characterization could not be induced in these rudimentary stories in a primer when so much time had to be devoted to teaching the little children the mere words. I disagreed with her and held firm in my contention that the same methods that were applicable to the reading of a poem of Browning were equally applicable to a first grade primer story. Her

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reply was, "Perhaps you will come into my class and show me how that's so," to which I replied, "I most certainly will." Some weeks later, when visiting this teacher's class, I entered as she was giving a reading lesson. I was just in time to hear a bewitching little girl with a Buster Brown haircut and a huge blue hairbow, demurely standing behind a front row desk reading the following lesson:

"The baby is in the cradle.
The mother is beside the cradle.
She is rocking the cradle.
There is a cat watching the baby.
Oh, see the cat!"

Despite the fact that there was, at the head of the page which contained this simple domestic drama, a picture of a young mother rocking a cradle in which lay a chubby baby, the little pupil read the lesson in a lilting monotonous tone as though everything in the story was quite new and strange to her. The teacher handed me a primer and asked me to select a lesson for demonstration. The lesson in hand being as good a one as any, I approached my little friend with the blue bow and suggested that she

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stand out in the aisle and close the book. When she had done so I asked her, "Have you a baby at home perhaps?" "Oh, yes," she replied, with spontaneous interest, "we have a new little brother." "Has your little brother a cradle?" I questioned. "Oh, yes," said she, with increasing interest, "it is the same one I used to have when I was little." "That's splendid," said I. "Now I wonder if you have a cat in your family?" "No," said the little maid, rather despondently, but quickly recovering her happy mood, "but we have a dog." "That will do just as well for our story," I assured her.

By this time every child in the class was alive with interest and many little hands were waving with desire to tell me that this one had a cat, and that one a dog and the other had a baby and a cradle at home.

"Now," said I to my little friend, "let us open the book and read the story again, because you are quite like the little girl who tells the story, having so many people and things in your home that are the same as hers." The child opened the book and gave another reading

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which, while an improvement on the perfunctory first reading, had none of the spontaneous quality of the child's responses concerning baby, cradle and mother. I asked her to again close the book and said, "Now when you open the book and read why can't you think about it and make believe that the baby in the story is your baby at home and the mother in the story is your mother, and the cat watches the baby just like your dog watches the cradle?" "I can't think about it like that here in school," she replied. "In school they don't let you think, they only let you read." Many of the children in the room nodded a serious assent and the strain was mercifully dispelled through a very hearty laugh by the class teacher, who I am sure was reached by the child's words as she had not been reached by the most learned arguments and theories.

The simple sincerity of expression gained by the use of the dramatic method in teaching reading from the earliest grades will always serve to show that the old method which concerns itself largely with punctuation marks and

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drill in words and sentences, has been not only ineffectual but absolutely harmful because, when it has not ignored individual expression it has aimed at a certain rhythm, inflection and interpretation calculated to reach "the average child" and as a matter of fact the average child does not exist. An interpretation which is not the expression of individual thought and feeling represents nobody.

Judging by my own experience I believe that creative interpretation which is the expression of individual thought and feeling can be secured by virtue of three things: first, through personal experience; second, through the experience of others as viewed in life and as given us in literature and in art; and third, through our power to picture the unknown. All three of these aids may be invoked to direct the imagination of the child to give spontaneous expression to the reading of the printed page.

Considering the child's personal experience as first aid to the multitudes of children who enter the crowded classrooms of the usual large public school that ominous second Monday in

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September, we are all too apt to take for granted the notion that these children, especially if they are in the kindergarten or in the early grades, are not to be credited with any prior personal experiences. We so often begin our work on the premise that everything must be explained to the child from the teacher's own point of view and according to her *own* experience.

In truth, if we will but take the time to patiently investigate in the most sympathetic way we shall find that children do not present themselves empty-headed but frequently with minds stored with rich memories. Like the little Hiawatha in the arms of old Nokomis, there are legions of children who have

“Heard the whispering of the pine trees,
Heard the lapping of the water—
Sounds of music, words of wonder;
Saw the moon rise from the water,
Saw the flecks and shadows on it,”

and like little Hiawatha they are all eager to question, “What is that?” but unlike the good Nokomis many of us do not know how to answer, and if we do not know we are rather afraid

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to say so. Therefore we do not attempt to find out from the child what he has seen, has heard, has questioned, has thought, has loved or desired, failing to realize that nothing which we attempt to teach finds lodgment in the child's mind unless it is linked with some past experience of his own, or unless it awakens in the child's mind a live interest.

Although the young child cannot help creative expression greatly through the experience of others as given us in literature and in art, his questions and answers can be very constructive through his observation of the ways of other children; while in his ability to picture the unknown he can be more helpful than any adult for in this field lies childhood's genius.

All the good stage business and good reading of lines which the audiences of The Children's Educational Theatre so greatly praise because of its natural qualities and its true adherence to child nature, is developed almost entirely through suggestions of the children who take part in the plays. Exactly the same manifold suggestions and observations can be used to

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secure genuine, sincere spontaneity of expression in a simple reading lesson if we will regard the lively curiosity of little children as our greatest help and not, as we are sometimes apt to regard it, as a hindrance and a cause of what we erroneously term, disorder.

Not long since and in perfect good faith, I heard said of a well-known educator who delivers lectures on the pedagogics of the Kindergarten and early grades, "She is a wonderful teacher but it is a pity she is obliged to teach because the children hamper her so greatly."

CHAPTER VIII

ALL THE GREAT HEROES AND HEROINES OF LITERATURE RESIDE IN THE KINGDOM WHERE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CRAVE TO BE THEIR DAILY COMPANIONS, TO LIVE WITH THEM IN THEIR HOMES AND TO INTERPRET THEIR THOUGHTS.

ALL the many statistical studies of children's reading show that with the teens imagination takes flight in the world of books and literature. Boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and seventeen as well as young men and women in every college throughout the country are just as interested as are little children in the form of play which the little ones call "making believe" and which the children of an older growth call "dramatics."

Stanley Hall tells us that if we make a study of the dramatic instinct as it operates at this stage of life we shall see that one of the characteristic changes of dawning adolescence is the

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awakening of intense interest in adult men and women and all their works and ways. Before this, children's chief interest is in other children, but pubescent boys and girls begin to wonder, with greater or less anxiety, how it will fare with them in the great world of grown-ups. It all seems so intricate. So much is hidden and there are so many contradictions and uncertainties.

It is just at this age that children infuse characters in literature with their own personal emotions, adopt them as their very own creations, and it is here that the creative development of the dramatic instinct is of paramount importance.

The girl of high school age "whose soul sprouts with buds of interest in adult life," is all aglow with passionate desire to try on a variety of new characters and it is only natural that she should choose for her ideals, characters in the books she reads and in the plays she sees. She frequently goes about with languishing eyes fancying herself in the character of Juliet and scorning all the youths amongst her acquaint-

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tance because none of them measure up to her conception of Romeo. She often sees herself walking in the woods in the doublet and hose of Ganymede and with all Rosalind's vivid fancy she sees her name carved by her Orlando, on every tree.

Types of women like Iphegenia, Hecuba, Cassandra, Andromache, Juliet, Rosalind, Miranda, Maggie Tulliver, Romola, Becky Sharp, Little Dorrit, etc., are all fellow women to the acquisitive soul of girlhood wherein a creature of the imagination may live a life no less real than the actual life of the girl's own mother or her teacher.

In the same way characters in books are essential realities for the callow awkward youth who, just at this age, begins to affect mannish manners. If his keen dramatic instinct is fed only on yellow covered hair raisers the boy develops quite logically the spirit of the gang and its bravado. To swagger and bully and brow-beat is natural, at this pubescent period, to the boy of the streets for he is bringing to the plane of expression the only characters he knows in

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books and it is comprehensible that his ideals should be the ideals of the slum and of the gutter. But through the right cultivation of his desire to characterize it is perfectly possible to develop the interest of the same boy in the character of an ideal hero and he will be the first one to recognize that the hero does things that are even more interesting and exciting than the things that are done by the mean, selfish braggart. He will even be sufficiently interested to acquire the language of the hero if only his appreciation is helped through expression.

Any boy would rather be a David Copperfield than a Uriah Heep if he could be developed through creative interpretation to understand the true values of the two characters, and their relation to life. But that is the important thing: he must understand their relation to life.

In other words, it is in their relation to life and especially in their relations to their own lives, that boys and girls regard the heroes and heroines of fiction. Despite the fact that almost all methods of academic teaching tend to deaden every relation between literature and

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life by dealing with "monotonous mastication of words," young people realize that the tales they read with most interest exist because men have lived and suffered and worked. This splendid realization comes to them for the very reason that they infuse characters and events in fiction and history with their own emotions. They experience abounding joy and abysmal anguish as they lose themselves in the varying fortunes of their favorite heroes and heroines and very often they carry on imaginary dialogues with their kings and queens, their statesmen and their entrancing princesses and no less exciting burglars and safe breakers. During adolescence boys and girls always secretly try to put themselves in the place of all the characters that deeply interest them in books. They are ready to think their thoughts and to speak their words, but alas! Education in general makes almost no wise use of this overpowering surge of desire on the part of youth to study literature through the medium of live expression.

Would that every mother and father could be

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made to see that it is almost a crime to allow their children to spend a preponderance of time in the study of the mere *form* of literature just at this crucial period when the flood gates of temperament are all ajar. Just at this time, when nature begins to transform the boy and girl into the man and woman should the fine ideals of literary characters be used to develop ideals for life—for nature is now more molten and plastic than it ever will be again and these flood gates may close with a leaden thud perhaps never to re-open.

It is now, when every child is still a subject in the Kingdom, when imagination craves to transcend the present and be molded and absorbed by the great personages and crucial events of fiction, that the true teacher can accomplish a work of lasting value and influence in the life of his pupil. It is now that the divine fervor of youth's dramatic instinct reflects a gleam of the creative genius of the master as youth tries to reincarnate the characters of the poet's fancy. He always wants to "speak the words trippingly on the tongue," but in many

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schools and in many homes also, this is rather discouraged and we are often so blind as to believe that our sons and daughters really know a book, a poem or a drama when they have been able to pass a satisfactory school examination in literature.

As middle-aged teachers and parents we do not often experience this craving need for expression and so we do not, in general, recognize the need which our children experience in this regard. We have forgotten the heart throbs caused by our first novel and how for days and weeks after we vicariously lived and suffered with our beloved hero and heroine. We have forgotten how we used secretly to fashion our style of hairdressing after hers or try on a manly style of handwriting which we believe our hero might have used.

If we are still rather young parents and teachers this time is not so long past, yet, it is a generally conceded truth that the great majority of all adults have largely forgotten their adolescent experiences and seem not to remember what a close connection exists at this period

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between muscles and morals. It is strange but only too true that there should be so much food for thought in Robert Louis Stevenson's query as to how far the philosophy of age is due to failing powers. Because *we* are satisfied to retire to the chimney corner to read the book or the magazine silently and alone we have forgotten that our children cry out for expression and that it is through self expression alone that youth grows, expands and develops.

It is so hard for us to recall the emotional life of our teens, that it seems quite natural to us to see our children studying their literature lessons from books which often contain more notes than text and we do not sense the fundamental error of the system even when we find that our children frequently know all the notes and have developed no love whatever for the text.

A very high mark may be secured in an examination by a child in whom no love of good reading has been instilled at this crucial age. I believe that the best way in which taste can be cultivated and a love of good literature per-

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manently instilled is through the right use of the medium suggested by youth itself, self expression. No child should be obliged to pass an examination on the text of a play which he has not seen and far better still, every child ought to be allowed to act a part in every play which he studies. Every thrill of response to the emotion of a fine character in literature will add a cubit to his own moral and mental stature, for no matter how the emotional plays appeal to the adult, their value for youth can best be gauged by regarding them as the young people themselves do. This is true, not only of plays, but the study of every form of literature should be approached at this period, through the medium of expression.

It is not so studied in most schools, for expression is not regarded as a part of literary training at all. It is called Oral English as opposed to written English which is called, Composition. It would be far better to unify these important subjects, since our insistence on keeping the various departments of literature entirely separate is a fundamental error and

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causes great confusion in the pupil's mind. It is a vital mistake to completely separate departmental work in any subject. We need greater unity throughout the entire school curriculum but there is no subject in which this separation works greater havoc than in literature.

Some time ago I was called upon to settle a spirited point of dispute in an argument between a Belgian girl of fifteen and an American girl of the same age. The Belgian girl chose to represent the patriot Egmont in a pageant play which I was preparing at my summer camp. The American girl chose to represent George Washington in the same play. The Belgian girl knew verbatim a long, thrilling speech which she planned to speak in order to vitalize her characterization. The American girl was greatly disconcerted on finding that she really had no speech to help her portrayal. "Oh, pshaw," said she, "I don't know anything nice to say for George Washington. I only know that old chestnut about the cherry tree and the hatchet." Then turning to her young Belgian friend she said, "How do you know all that

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fine long speech about Egmont? I never heard of him.” “Egmont is one of Belgium’s great patriots and I learned his speeches in our literature class in school,” replied the Belgian child. “Don’t you learn speeches in your literature lessons in school?”

The American girl, after thinking carefully replied, with patriotic loyalty to American methods, “We have oral English and composition in our school but that isn’t literature, is it?”

As referee I merely told the girls the story of Mr. Jourdain in “Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme”; he who had been talking prose all his life but did not know it. Molière’s joke always gets a good laugh on any stage yet it is not a particle more humorous than the American high school girl’s reply to the Belgian girl. The only difference is that Molière meant Mr. Jourdain’s reply to his tutor to be a comedy line whereas our school curriculum is a serious situation.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE KINGDOM, LITERATURE IS REGARDED AS AN
EXPRESSION OF OUR COMMON HUMANITY AND
SPEECH IS THE DIRECT MEDIUM FROM SOUL TO
SOUL.

EVERY progressive school principal and teacher at the present time is considering ways to establish a more vital and interesting connection between the home and the school. Parents' Associations and Mothers' Clubs, which hold their meetings in the schools, have proven their great communal value in doing neighborhood service in a civic way. How excellent a thing it would be if members of such organizations would add greater spiritual value to their useful activities by considering a return to the good old custom of reading aloud in the home circle.

Boys and girls so often confess that, when they attempt to read aloud and to enact at home characters in the plays they have studied

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and in the books they have read, they run the risk of being called foolish, romantic or "stage struck." They become discouraged by the oft repeated phrase, "Oh, you will get over all that foolishness when you grow to be my age." If instead of saying this mothers and fathers would try to re-live in imagination their own boyhood and girlhood they would probably find that in youth they had experienced the same desire. It is certain that at one time or another, during early adolescence, many of the finest types of men and women have been "stage struck" although they may never confess it.

They might be far more willing to confess to what they probably regard as a weakness if they were fully convinced that the finest intuitions of budding manhood and womanhood are apparent in this desire to vicariously live in the lives and in the thoughts of the ideal characters of fiction. If parents will reconsider in fancy how many of the ideas which have grown cold and stale to them as practical men and women of affairs still formed some of their finest ideals of youth, it may cause them to

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remember that in youth their power to appreciate was far ahead of their power to express. It is always thus in youth and that is why we need to cultivate expression in order that appreciation may come to the plane of true consciousness.

To-day, more than ever in the history of the world, we need to cultivate expression because every invention of modern times adds another sepulchre in the graveyard of speech. Steam and lightning have so annihilated distance that expression is almost disregarded and action takes its place. The ocean grayhound, the mile a minute railway train, the telegraph, the telephone, and lastly "the silent drama," popularly known as "the movies," all conspire to slay and bury the spoken word.

That the majority of young people to-day possess so poor and meager a vocabulary, that they so easily slump to the language of slang, is due to the fact that they themselves have not generally *used* the words and phrases of the great prose and poetic writers. They are not really on familiar speaking terms with what they

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read. The printed word is often like the dead pressed flower, a mere mortuary possessing but little of the color and almost none of the perfume of the living plant. The spoken word is hot with feeling and saturated with the color of life.

Speech is the direct medium from soul to soul. It has been so from time out of mind whereas printing is comparatively a modern invention. The invention of letters is new to the race that spoke for countless ages before it wrote. All life goes back to a question of speech because all life goes back to our relations with one another and true literature is only an expression of our common humanity. Therefore it seems rational that the teaching of literature should be made a process whereby youth is brought into interesting and intelligent contact, not only with the material world about him but with the world of the human spirit both past and present. The admirable character buried in the pages of a book is, after all, only an intellectual idea. It may satisfy us but it does not mean much to our children.

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Why not use this golden but fleeting adolescence to help children develop individuality through the medium of the great characters in fiction and history, since boys and girls at this age are vitally concerned with the making of themselves into great and noble characters?

Interpretation is the most natural and most genial method for developing individuality, taste and appreciation in youth and I am not so sure but what the same thing is true for us parents and teachers as well. Teachers frequently say to me, "If only I was not too self conscious to take part in a play, what a help for my teaching the interpretation would be!"

Sometimes it seems to be the children alone who truly know the value of expression when they constantly crave to read themselves into the very heart of the vicarious character for that alone is the secret of success in all interpretation. To get under the skin of the new character and to have the heart pulsate and the soul thrill in response to the new life—that is the splendid and righteously exciting thing for our boys and girls to do and we ought to en-

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courage them to do it instead of setting them down to study the form and structure of literature and so starving their emotions instead of developing them to adequate expression through the best possible means that the ages have afforded us.

Woe unto the child who constantly experiences the desire to express and who is given no opportunity to do so; for the creative instinct inhibited results in the greatest ills of adolescence, whereas the release and right direction of the creative emotion instead of its suppression may be a great therapeutic agent.

It is far more important to universalize the sympathies of a child by bringing him into personal relations with characters in books and plays than it is to have him know that such or such a verse is written in iambic tetrameter. It is a crucial error to teach a child to fashion his reading of verse according to the meter instead of according to the thought. Children are constantly so taught and as a result their sight reading is mechanical, stilted and tiresome both to themselves and to their hearers.

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Because pupils must be prepared for the examinations which they are obliged to pass, a deal of valuable time is devoted to the tuition of form which might otherwise be devoted to the development of expression. It is true that in literature it is necessary to teach form and structure. A literary work, like a well planned house, has a definite arrangement of parts designed to present its idea in most effective manner, but the adolescent will not be interested to study the structure of his house until he has begun to live in it. Indeed he *must* live in it before he can become familiar with its structure.

The instinct of youth for the beauty and vividness of expression, boyhood and girlhood's intuitive feeling that behind the message a human soul exists and youth's desire to reincarnate the soul through the message, all furnish us with our best guides on the pathway of literary instruction but, like many another sign post which the natural instincts of youth have set up for us, we turn aside and refuse to take

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the parallel road, just as we do in the case of the little child.

The sign posts on the parallel road all lead to the wide, entrancing boulevard called Life. The sign posts on the cross road which we take, all lead to the narrow, dusty, interminable little by-road called Examinations. Yet there is a short cut to the cross road by way of the Boulevard and we might all of us save time by taking this cross cut. Lest we fail to recognize the cross cut and lose time in passing it by, we may remember that *it* also is shown by a little sign-post bearing the words Speech and Dramatization and there is generally some child nearby to point it out.

An unusually fine teacher of English whose work is well known to many educators, frequently takes the little cross cut and succeeds thereby in reaching the street called Examinations in good season each school term. Her pupils are encouraged and stimulated to bring many of the characters in literary prose and poetry to the plane of expression and this teacher frequently arranges classroom plays.

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Thus to her pupils the characters in literature assume the enchanting interest of men and women of their acquaintance.

During the period of its production in New York this teacher arranged for her class to see a dramatized version of *Evangeline* in which a very handsome and popular actress took the title rôle. When my friend the class teacher asked her young scholars for some appreciation of the acting of the play one girl of twelve said, "The lady who played *Evangeline* was beautiful. She looked *Evangeline* from the first. Her dress was lovely and everything seemed right but, as the play went on she did not *grow* *Evangeline* so we girls did not care much for it."

It is easy to prophesy the result of that kind of tuition for every girl in that class was able to pass a pretty stiff examination on Longfellow's poem and doubtless they could pass an examination on any masterpiece of literature regarding which they could make so discerning a criticism.

My own experience in teaching literature

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through expression, which *is* life, convinces me that we can be certain of reaching the broad, gay, sad, enchanting highway only by way of the little cross cut and are we not justified in taking it when we remember that speech is one of the gifts by which man rises above the brute and that it is the instinct for expression which made men create literature?

Homer, the great singer whose epithet was "articulate speaking men," did not first think of constructing an epic poem. His heart was filled, his soul inspired by some tradition of his race, his nation, his religion; so he told his story in simple effective speech. He spoke for the people, he gave voice to the expression which they felt; and he is a great poet, not because his epic takes a certain approved form and meter but because the content of what he sang is true and sincere in its relation to human life to-day.

Shakespeare is the greatest English writer, not because what he wrote took the form of dramatic literature, which is the highest form, but because he presents the deep abiding truths

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of universal life in living form and not in dead abstractions.

Form is not first in the mind of the writer; why should it be first in the mind of the teacher? We seem constantly to lose sight of the truth that form and structure are only processes of the centuries. Why then do we magnify the letter and lose the spirit when, at this fertile period of early adolescence, we need to do exactly the reverse?

CHAPTER X

THE PEOPLE WHO, IN BOOKS, SEEM TO BE DEAD
AND BURIED ARE ALL ALIVE WHEN WE MEET
THEM IN THE KINGDOM.

THE preponderance of time devoted in the past to the matter of form has its dire effect on that part of the school curriculum called composition or written English. For example, when the subject for a composition is given out in class the questions arise, "Shall I write mine in prose or poetry?" "May I write my composition like a play and if I do, how many acts shall I have?" We frequently consent to allow children to place these considerations first because tradition weighs so heavily that we are all apt to forget that the division of acts has nothing to do with the interest of a play nor is the adoption of the prose or poetic form in writing a matter for primal consideration. What is basic in a play is the story ele-

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ment and what is important in any piece of literature is its underlying thought. In the tuition of both written and spoken English we cannot cultivate a sense of beauty, we cannot enlarge thought, we cannot elevate and refine spirit by a consideration of form.

What is very apt to happen when we devote a preponderance of time to a primal consideration of technique is to develop in young people analytic tendencies of criticism before the higher powers of synthetic appreciation have been instilled. Adolescence is the time above all others, when true literature which is but a reflection of life should be taught in synthetic fashion. We need to train young people to see a literary masterpiece as a whole before we show them how to pick it apart. We do not know a poem, or a prose story, or a play until we know its entire story, its idea, its motive. We need synthetic work in beginning the study of literature.

But unhappily so much of school work is analytic and that may be one reason why so many children at the beginning of the teens break

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away from school. They are tired of learning, they want to live. The narrowness of mere analytic work often prompts youth, in the enthusiastic, sometimes wrongly called the wayward age, to leave school and seek a more interesting and exciting way of life. It is not that every child who claims his working papers at the age of fourteen is obliged to earn his own living. Parents frequently say, "I want to keep my boy and my girl at school but they will not stay." It is often the most eager, enthusiastic, hopeful children who "will not stay" because they do not seem to themselves to be learning anything in school which they can put to use in life or, at least, they do not see how the things they are learning can be put to use.

These same young people after they have left school and bent their energies to finding a job soon discover that intelligent employers consider as necessary qualifications their manner of address and the quality and character of their spoken and written English. They begin to see that improvement in these things means improvement in salary and they cast about for

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means of betterment. Such children sometimes decide to attend night school and frequently they come to the classes of The Children's Educational Theatre. Indeed, the majority of those who frequent the classes of The Children's Educational Theatre are between the ages of fourteen and twenty and represent boys and girls who have left school at the age of fourteen.

For several years we have had, in connection with The Children's Educational Theatre, a class in Diction and Expression. In this class we try to accomplish two things: first, to use interpretation as a means of training appreciation, and second, to use expression as a means of training motive. The class is really used as a feeder for our plays and that serves to keep the interest always at boiling point.

The young people who come to this class are encouraged to recite a selection of their own choosing and the instructor, assisted by suggestions from class members, criticizes the rendition of the selection. We discuss primarily whether the interpreter has made clear to us



A mob scene from "The Prince and the Pauper"

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the thought which the author intended to convey. If he has succeeded in making clear the author's thought, has he gained from us any response to that thought? Has he been able to invoke and develop in us that action of the mind in picturing which we call Imagination? Has he gone through this process for himself in studying the selection; has he succeeded in inducing this process in us through his interpretation?

All this discussion naturally brings us to the next vital question, namely, Does the author's thought or motive in this selection warrant our enthusiastic response? Is the idea which caused the author to compose his selection worthy of our appreciation? Thus we arrive naturally at the stage where our boys and girls use expression as a means of developing appreciation. A few concrete examples may serve to illustrate this development more clearly.

Three years ago a lad of fifteen applied for the part of Tom Canty in the play "The Prince and the Pauper." Another was rehearsing the

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part just then, so the new applicant was asked to enter the class in diction and expression until we had time to give him a chance to try for the part in the play.

“What sort of a class is that,” said he, “what do you learn there?” A class member explained that in this class a boy or girl was allowed to bring any recitation that he pleased and after he had spoken the piece he would hear what the class teacher and the class members thought of the way he spoke it. “Oh, I see,” said the lad. “It is an elocution class. I’ll be there next time.” Faithful to his word the lad appeared at the following lesson and offered as his contribution to the class a highly melodramatic rendering of “The Face on the Bar Room Floor.” It did not take long for the class members together to work out the idea or motive which caused the author to write this effusion, for they decided quite unanimously that it had been written merely to harrow the feelings over the insincere ravings and protestations of a drunkard. Those present confessed that they did not know how a man with delir-

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ium tremens might express himself but they believed that, to express the words of the drunkard sincerely the boy would be obliged to identify himself for the time being with the drunkard and they did not find that the interest in the selection warranted so much painstaking work. They suggested that the boy choose something else for the next class meeting, which he accordingly agreed to do.

“Barbara Frietchie” was his next selection and in criticizing his rendition we found that the motive of this poem, the courageous fervor of patriotism of an aged woman, held our interest far more securely than the maudlin ravings of the victim of delirium tremens. Many of the young people in the class said the “language” of this poem was a great deal better than that of the boy’s first selection. What they meant was that the entire idea including the form and construction were better although they did not express it just that way. They said the “language” is better because they had arrived at a consideration of form through con-

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tent and especially through spoken interpretation of content.

In order to help in intelligent criticism of rendition each class member must come into the Kingdom of Imagination by trying to picture the environment of the characters in the story of the poem or prose selection he chooses to recite. To do this he must study the whole story of his selection; he must distinguish all the changes in situation, in point of view, in attitude of mind, in depth of feeling and he must render all as genuinely as possible. If the speaker brings us into sympathetic communication with the author, if he has aroused in us hearty response to the author's meaning, he has given a worthy interpretation. After young people have been attached to this class for some time they are not quite so anxious to have their fellow members say, "How well you recited that poem," as they are to have them say, "I never thought there was so much in that poem until you interpreted it for us."

When boys and girls first come to this class they invariably offer a selection which they

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believe best suits their particular style of delivery. That is why the lad brought to what he at first called the Elocution Class the popular neighborhood recitationist's favorite, "The Face on the Bar Room Floor." He expected to be applauded for the style of his delivery and when he found that the subject matter of his selection was taken into account as well as its rendition, he accepted the suggestion of the class to "choose something else" because he wanted to recite and he wanted an audience.

That is largely the crux of the matter. Young people like to feel that they are delivering a message which some one wants to hear. It is so much more interesting and exciting than merely repeating a lesson and this seems to me to be a very legitimate form of pedagogic excitement. The lad who at first brought the trashy selection remained in this class three years and learned to recite with great charm and sincerity many selections by Kipling, Tennyson, Longfellow, Whittier, Milton and Shakespeare while in the play of "The Prince and the Pauper" he proved to be one of the best Tom

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Cantys we have ever trained. He developed something of a taste for good reading while his own choice of language constantly improved.

I could cite so many hundred instances of a similar nature all of which convince me that in youth a love of good literature and a choice of good English will be the by-product of the interest of expression in manifold cases where neither could otherwise be developed.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE BIBLE ARE PAGE AFTER PAGE OF ATTRACTIVE STORIES THAT CONTAIN GUIDING LESSONS OF LIFE. WHEN SUNDAY SCHOOL IS A PART OF THE KINGDOM THESE STORIES MAY ALL BE MADE PLAIN TO CHILDREN.

JUST as self expression is the best medium to help children to an appreciation of good literature, so a new force of personal application of all the wonderful Bible lessons will come into the life of the child who is allowed to consider Biblical characters as living actualities. Nothing can take the place of stimulating the child to speak the grand, sonorous phrases of the patriarchs and to re-live, in the brief tabloid life of drama, the characters of Biblical lore.

In teaching English literature in which constant allusion is made to the Bible, it has been found that even high school students possess but a very rudimentary knowledge of the great book. A teacher of English in a superior high

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school situated in a neighborhood in which every child probably attends Sunday School, tells the story of one of her students who, passing out of a crowded classroom, caught her hair on the key of a closet at some distance above her head. The teacher in charge of the class laughingly cried out, "Absalom!"—and every girl in the class looked at the teacher in blank amazement. The instructor pondered these puzzled looks as she unwound the rebellious strands of hair to free her young pupil and gradually she remembered that at each literature lesson wherein allusion to the Bible had occurred, in poem or in prose, detailed explanation had always been necessary.

A survey of this field has assured me that the majority of English literature teachers have encountered a similar experience and some of them think it is due to the fact that their pupils have never attended Sunday School and are not receiving any instruction whatever in Biblical history. However, my own experience leads me to disagree with the teacher who declares that the child's failure to know, interpret and apply

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the Bible story is due to lack of attendance at Sunday School. I think it is due in great measure to the lack of training and discernment on the part of the Sunday School teacher who, when delving into the rich mine of Biblical lore, has no knowledge of how to use his readiest tool, the eager vitality of childhood's imagination.

Whether the greatest of teachers, Christ, ever instructed a child in religion we do not know, but we have been told that when he wished to show his disciples what religion *was*, he took a child and set him in the midst of them. The interpretation of that act is that the child possesses "simple faith," that instinctive something which is better than "Norman blood," and which is indeed the primal virtue of all true religion. This great asset, faith, lifts the child above the fetters of doubt so that he comes to the teacher ready to pursue fearless inquiry into the great unknown. Before theologies confuse and contradictory dogmas cloud their understanding, children hold joyous communion with the life which God has put into the world.

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Wordsworth, in "Intimations of Immortality," has truly said:

"Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home."

It is the child who senses the spirit which lives in the cloud, in the storm, in the sea, and who sees in every wonder of nature the manifestation of a supreme power. Ask any very young child what he thinks thunder is, and his answer is almost certain to be, "It is God shooting off his cannons in the sky." Every mother who has studied her own child with any degree of sympathetic insight must know that it is not at all difficult for the child to believe that God sees him always, that God is everywhere, both within us and without; yet all this communion with a divine power is often interrupted and demoralized by over-zealous Sunday School teachers who cavil with the child over some trivial incident in a Bible story, instead of utilizing his imagination as the best aid in an adequate and enlightening interpretation.

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I recall the case of a young friend of mine aged ten, who lives in a suburb of New York, and who, last spring, was sent to Sunday School for the first time. I went out from town to dine with the family and was just removing my hat when the little fellow bounded into the parlor with his arms full of daisies. His father said to him, "Well, Howard, what did you learn to-day at Sunday School?"

"I guess I didn't learn much," he replied, "because the teacher was telling us some fool story about Balaam and an angel and an ass, and I couldn't make out what God had to do with it. But on the way home I found a grand field of daisies and I picked all these, so I guess God's all right."

Now here was a child who possessed all the possibilities for a genuine deepening of spiritual consciousness through the right application of the wonderful vision of Balaam's ass, the dumb beast who was able to see the angel of the Lord, while his master was blind to the angel's presence. The hard part of it is that all children do not live in the country and cannot

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stoop to fill their arms with daisies; nor is the angel of the Lord always ready to guard with drawn sword the sacred portals of childhood's Kingdom of imagination.

The trouble with religious teaching is much the same as with other instruction wherein the teacher fails to recognize the attitude of the child in relation to the Deity and his works. The *works* of God may not at once recommend him to the needs of the adult, but children love God and revere him rather for what he does than for what he is. And since the Almighty Father appears to them only through some working of his, it is entirely right to teach a child that the knowledge of God is based on God's manifestations in human concerns. Religious teaching for the child is weakened by attempting to lead him to think of God as pure spirit. It is the God who is near that is regarded by the child as sympathetic. The race was the same in its childhood. We find that in the first manifestation of the God-idea in history, men connected God with unaccountable and supernatural effects and it was through these

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effects that the notion of an invisible cause arose. Primitive men never imagined a God in the abstract and then speculated about his powers; they began at the other end, as the child does. They saw many manifestations of power, and in time learned that these were but the evidence of a single Power.

Therefore it seems natural that a good way to develop and not to destroy a child's primitive faith in a living God, as well as to utilize his own interest when teaching him the Bible, is to put the Bible story into dramatic form, and then allow the child to use his dramatic or creative instinct to help him crystallize that faith through the concrete form which the Bible character personifies. In other words, we should train the child's imaginative faculty so that he may vividly picture Bible scenes, and then encourage him, under the most intelligent and sympathetic guidance, to enact the characters in these scenes.

Perhaps the formal orthodox teacher or parent will raise the objection that this form of Biblical tuition is apt to develop into mere sac-

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rileigious play, but the history of parallel work in this field of religious instruction will not support this apprehension. The production of the mystery and miracle play in medieval times was always undertaken in a spirit of reverential piety and the players and audiences always evinced great spiritual devotion to their work. If this can be true of the adult, how much easier will it be to effect this result with the child and even with the adolescent, if he be allowed, under proper direction, to enter upon his vicarious spiritual experience whilst the eager vitality of his imagination may still regard the Bible character as a living and inspiring actuality.

When we take our finite self as a starting point for characterization, as self conscious adults are so apt to do, we are oppressed by a difficulty which disappears when we start from the spiritual center of the Biblical character, and actually believe ourselves to be sharers in the new life. Constant experience in rehearsing children in plays will serve to show others, as it has shown me, that the child ardently believes in the reality of his assumed

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character. The spirit of the character lays hold upon the child and abides long after the play is over.

I recall the preparation, many years ago, of a Christmas play at a college settlement wherein several children had been trained to enact angels. On the day of the performance the audience was beginning to arrive when I reached the house, and one little girl of the cast was battering at the door and weeping piteously. In answer to my inquiry as to why she was crying, she wailed hopelessly, "They won't let me in—they won't let me in—and I've *got* to be an angel!" Her childish soul was beset by the actual need of her presence in the make-believe heaven and the gravity of her fault in failing to meet her spiritual responsibility along with the other angels deeply impressed her.

The little play here referred to, "The Star of Bethlehem," was well written and adequately rehearsed, and the story of the Nativity was, through its rehearsal and simple production, indelibly stamped on the mind and heart of every youthful player, while the audience, com-

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posed largely of the parents of the players, sat in rapt and reverent attention. The surety that the lesson which is acted out is more certain to be remembered than the lesson which is merely recited indicates an urgent point; namely, that the dramatization of the Bible story must be extremely well made and the actual Biblical language employed wherever that is possible; when dialogue is added the spirit of the text of the great book should be retained in sonority and grandeur. Thus, through youth's intense interest in this work he would not only learn Bible facts and Biblical phraseology but we should be able to bring home to him a realization of the personal and universal applications of the precepts upon which religion is founded.

Abraham Lincoln owed his entire knowledge of how to write and how to speak in soul stirring literary phrases, to thorough acquaintance with the great book during his early boyhood; and who shall say that his unswerving strength of character may not also have been shaped in youth by the same influence?

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The right characterization and interpretation of the Bible story within the Kingdom might have effect upon the character of every child if all children were helped to bring divine revelation to life in terms of feeling because every child thinks of God in terms of feeling, just as Elizabeth Barrett Browning says in "A Child's Thought of God,"

"God is good, He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across his face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

But still I *feel* that his embrace
Slides down by thrills, through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place."

CHAPTER XII

IN THE KINGDOM, BIBLE STORIES ARE SHOWN AS THE WONDERFUL SYMBOLIC ALLEGORIES THEY ARE, AND WHICH CHILDHOOD'S PURE ASPIRING, SPIRITUAL IMAGINATION READILY BELIEVES THEM TO BE.

THERE surely can be no reason against teaching the Bible in terms of feeling for, in the last analysis we are obliged to refer all religion to a "supernatural sense." The whole history of religion, the entire gamut of the intense inner drama of agony, despair, hope, attainment, shows that feeling is the eternal spring of religion's vitality. Considering the Bible in the realms of both ethics and literature, it seems right to give body and substance to feeling through dramatic use of Biblical characters, knowing as we do that childhood's dramatic instinct is at the very root of the creative forces of life. In this way we may be able to teach the genuine import of revelation in terms of feeling, together with its definite bearing

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on action. There ought to be great advantage to the well equipped educator in this method of interpreting the Bible in terms of feeling, inasmuch as feeling is in itself activity, and in feeling action is already begun.

Of course the best setting for a Bible play is in some beautiful countryside where the players may be surrounded by the mystic wonders of nature; the hills, the rocks, the clouds and the sky drop of the heavens. But failing this possibility, any Sunday School is large enough to occasionally produce a play and the tiniest room in any Sabbath school even in the most crowded section of a noisy city, may constitute the Kingdom; such is the instinctive faith of the little child.

This carries me naturally to the next urgent point, which is a realization of the fact that childhood's divine talent of imagination, a sure and ready tool, is at the same time a sharp and double-edged one, and may be diverted by the half-educated, over sentimental teacher into most undesirable channels. But this is the case with all truly useful weapons, and should not

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prevent us from placing the sharp tool in the sure and steady hand.

There are thousands of women with a missionary spirit who ardently desire some outlet for their religious fervor. They know very little of the child's point of view, they have had no training in teaching and they could not teach in a day school; but they are eagerly accepted by their minister as instructors in the Sunday School, and are often given classes of little boys that they may exhale upon them gracious influence. Now, I doubt whether any minister believes it is easier to teach arithmetic than it is to teach the Bible, yet these ladies with the missionary spirit are entrusted with the teaching of young children at the time when the little ones possess the greatest possibilities for a righteous and intelligent spiritual interpretation of the heroes of Biblical lore.

The story was recounted to me of one such lady who thought it would be appealing and helpful to tell her class the story of Adam and Eve in her own language. She had read somewhere about childhood's ready grasp of the

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objective lesson so she decided to cut the story down to what she considered the level of the children's understanding. She was greatly pleased with her apparent success inasmuch as the class, composed of miscellaneous and somewhat rough village boys without any particular home training, listened attentively to her recital. But here is the way in which the brightest lad in the class recounted the story to a number of young friends. I repeat his language verbatim. "There was two of 'em, and they ate off the wrong tree, and the snake told on 'em, and he said, '*she* made me do it,' and so God said, 'You both go to hell!' "

Now that boy had every fact in the story well impressed on his mind, so well indeed that he was able to boil down his facts to the most terse, concise expression, and it is probable that every boy in the class who listened also absorbed the main facts of the story; yet no pupil in the class was in any way enriched or developed thereby.

Not long since a friend who teaches Sabbath School assured me that her minister who is a

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well-known divine, constantly tells his teachers to get the children's minds clear as to the facts of Bible history, but not to trouble about offering any interpretation to the child, as interpretation, he says, is his office. On one occasion the minister entered this teacher's classroom just as she was reviewing a lesson on Jacob and heard her put to a boy pupil the question, "Whom did Jacob marry?" "Why," replied the little chap, "Jacob served seven years for Rachel, but he got stung with Leah!"

The teacher, who has a keen sense of humor, naturally laughed, but the minister was greatly shocked and admonished the boy never to use such language in connection with the Bible. The teacher, who is very intelligent, felt that she could readily have helped this boy to translate facts into values by making some worthy present day application of the loyalty of Jacob's passion and the final attainment of his ideal through devoted service. But interpretation is the prerogative of this minister and of many such, even though the wisdom of the little child often "passeth all understanding."

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It is probable that neither the boy who retold the facts of the creation nor the boy who told the fact of Jacob's marriage was an embryonic Michael Angelo nor a "mute inglorious Milton," but is it likely that we shall ever see another fresco whose beauty equals the one in the Sistine Chapel or ever glory in the cadences of another "Paradise Lost" if we permit the minister to usurp the entire field of interpretation and leave no part of it to the child?

The Bible in its entirety, and by that I mean both the Old and New Testaments, ought to be a help to each life in a process of enlargement, whereas it often happens that the great book interpreted for us according to creed and dogma is the most narrowing process in the world. Yet it is certain that the Bible can serve to keep open "the windows of the soul" and to enlarge the child's spiritual horizon if he is shown the Bible stories as the wonderful symbolic allegories they are and which the child's pure, aspiring, spiritual imagination can readily believe them to be.

By exemplifying religion in actual life,

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through the study with a view to characterization, of the spiritual personage, we employ the psychologic process of getting a clear concept or expression for what has been lurking in the mind merely as a feeling, mysterious, vague, unsatisfactory, perhaps at times tantalizing to youth. Once the adequate characterization is developed it becomes a living power; a spiritual ideal is born, and the human self is in possession of it. Youth's delight in this way of studying the Bible story develops attention and attention develops increasing delight. Helped by this focus of attention the instructor can induce an almost spontaneous sense of values, whereupon it becomes easy for the child to grasp the spiritual thought back of the concrete idea and through his own endeavor to realize that the foundations of religion lie deeper than the idea which is used to exemplify them.

This truth became very clear to me during the progress of rehearsing "The Prodigal Son," a very fine dramatization of this parable which was made by one of the students in the Normal

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Course for Teachers at Columbia University, which I direct. In the reading of this parable, as well as in the ministerial interpretation of its lesson, young people always feel that the elder brother was unfairly treated. They express the feeling that all the lessons instilled into them about the need of remaining under the parental roof to do the bidding of the parents and to help them in the daily task is upset by the fact that the father rewarded the one who left home because for him was the fatted calf killed and the great feast made.

Our author introduced into the first act of her drama a group of children who were sons and daughters of the elder brother. The children are playing together under the shade of a tree when the two brothers enter, arguing hotly. The father of the children tells their uncle that he sees no reason why he cannot remain at home and tend the sheep, while his anger against the younger brother's determination to fare forth into the world and try untrodden paths grows stronger, as he points out to him the needlessness of such action. Very gently and in beau-

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tifully chosen phrase, the younger brother tells the elder one that he cannot stay for something within him, which is stronger than himself, prompts him to go forth into the world and see what life may have in store for him. Waxing angrier still at what to one of the elder brother's nature appears a totally insufficient reason, he makes as though to strike the younger brother. At this juncture one of the children who was playing in the shade of the trees, being attracted by the argument, involuntarily rose as the argument increased in warmth and seizing his father's arm cried out, "Do not strike my uncle. He cannot help it; he must go!"

The children in the play loved their uncle. His is, in this excellent play, a sympathetic character to childhood, for to young blood the unknown is always alluring and full of promise. There is also a group of children introduced into the second act of this play and they follow part of the fortunes of the Prodigal when he is the Swineherd. They are sorry for his suffering and distress so that in the last act they

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understand *why* the loving father hails his return with joy and feasting. And this is just *why* Christ spoke the Parable and I think we shall never really make youth *see* the why unless we help him to *be* the why. What an economy of life's short span we might effect if we could always make youth see this through the vicarious life. But it is well worth while if he realizes it only now and then in the concentrated life of drama.

Thus, I feel certain, infinitely greater value may accrue to young persons through "acting out" such Biblical characters as Isaac, Jacob, Esther or Rebecca than could accrue to them through merely reading about these characters even though their reading were supplemented by the commentary of a minister. We shall also find here, as in all dramatics with young people, that their ardent desire to enact the character will lead them to turn with diligence to their study of the Bible, for with the interesting end of impersonation in view the child can be depended upon to sharpen his perceptions in every manner. Through this method

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it will be a natural induction that the spiritual life was not in Biblical records, a thing apart, but one manifested through human experience.

The mere mention of Job, for example, brings to the mental retina of children a nebulous, remote personage whose type seems utterly impossible now. But the right dramatic development of the character of Job would induce the child to realize that Biblical heroes fought in the ranks just as men fight to-day, but that through firm belief in divine help, they were also able to control the issues. This assurance affords inward stability and draws the tremendous motive power of hope along a continuous line with youth's natural asset, faith.

There is another valuable lesson which can be best suggested through the genial and interesting method of enacting the character of Job: namely, that pain and sorrow act as cleansing fire and show, through the development of the character, not that sorrow in itself has any intrinsic value, but that the blessing of sorrow lies in the spiritual activities which it excites. It is well to allow this great truism to take con-

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crete form in the Biblical drama, so that young people may develop a sense of its present day application; for now as then the crown of thorns is but a prelude to the wreath of laurel, and nothing worth while is ever developed except through suffering.

So much that is in the widest sense educational may be effected by the well dramatized Bible story and the sympathetic and intelligent direction of the children in its portrayal, that I have allowed myself to speculate upon the possibility of inducing through the vicarious experience of the Biblical character, what I term religious loyalty. But might not this congenial method of instruction bring home to youth a desirable knowledge of the fact that each boy and girl is natural heir to a spiritual inheritance which it should be his pride to pass on, and so prove that his ancestors have not lived and fought in vain?

These are times when we all need some sort of replenishment from a deeper spiritual root than we find either within ourselves or in our environment. When we see the chaos in the

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world to-day it is very hard, at times, for us to hold firm in a faith which says, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." These are times when that religious patriotism which the acting out of the Biblical character should induce may help to answer a great need. It may be that the child will find a source of fresh inspiration for his own life, in the depths of the new life which he, for the time being, represents.

And shall I be accused of too ardent a belief in this powerful but as yet undeveloped method of using drama as an adjunct to religious instruction, if I suggest that, through the right use of childhood's instinctive faith, children might be taught a sense of religious unity and through that perhaps a sense of national unity?

The leaders of religious congresses discuss at length the millennium of universal religion and universal peace, but is it probable the adult will ever develop an honestly fraternal attitude toward his brethren of differing creeds and differing nations until the child's primitive faith is utilized to the desirable understanding that a passionate devotion to one faith or to

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one country need not be a bar to sympathetic and fraternal relations with people of differing creeds and of other lands?

At the present day we certainly need some form of educative work with human beings that will produce an increase of spiritual vigor sufficient vitally to illumine the phrase, often repeated in prayer but infrequently carried into action, "Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE KINGDOM'S DOMAIN STRETCHES BEYOND THE WALLS OF THE UNIVERSITY SO THAT EVEN A STAUD COLLEGE PROFESSOR MAY BE A DWELLER IN THE KINGDOM IF HE HAS A MIND TO.

THE foregoing chapters express ideas and precepts developed through long experience in using towards self expression and character development the interest which all children and young people have in dramatic play.

One of the first precepts in pedagogics is "Create interest in the subject matter which you are about to teach," but when the subject matter is put into the form of dramatic play we as teachers and parents are not obliged to *create* the interest because, the child being essentially dramatic by nature, the interest already exists. It is merely our part to learn how to make the wisest use of a natural interest.

To the one who has his ear to the ground

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children are always saying, "Let us try to learn the lessons in our own ways, and if you help us in these ways we can remember." Translated into the language of the educator, what these children say is just what I have tried to express throughout these pages: Interest attaches to the visualized development of the acted story; a play shows the relation of means to end. Human beings, and especially young ones, want to *see* things work out. They prefer to see the wheels of life go round in a play rather than learn of the effect of their clogging in a sermon.

A good play is absorbingly interesting to a child and young person, and it is interest alone which can promote the development of a vigorous mental life since both mind and character are molded through interest. When children see a play which contains human dramatic situations they experience thrills of feeling, and when feelings are strong they are likely to modify conduct.

But experience has taught me that the interest which children have in seeing a play acted

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by even the greatest players is not half so powerful as that which they experience in being themselves a part of the play. We are constantly realizing that the best and most constructive impulses of youth demand expression, and dramatic instinct hungers for a rehearsal stage on which to enact life's drama. The dramatic method is so wonderfully adapted to the needs of youth that the growing soul is always enabled to widen its cramped quarters through the agency of the vicarious life. And this is true, not only of children of elementary and high school age, it is true also of college students of both sexes.

It is therefore unfortunate that, as yet, the majority of college professors are blind to the power of the dramatic instinct because its creative energy still exists in adolescence and demands an outlet. Indeed, the faculty of most colleges believe that the production of plays is but little concern of theirs since play production is an outside interest and has no bearing on the curriculum either in preparation or result. Five years ago, while discussing the ar-

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rangement for a play to be given by the senior class of a woman's college, I said to the student committee in charge, "Will the coach whom you engage confer with the heads of your department of English so that the play may be fully prepared by class study, as you expect to have the stage director here for so short a time? Will the coach meet the head of your department of physical culture, that the two may confer regarding any necessary corrective work? Will your department of music come into close touch with your play-producer, so that all the music for your play may be prepared and rehearsed in good season, and will your art department coöperate in the preparation of costumes and scenery?"

The young woman's eyes opened more widely at each question, but finally her eyes half closed in a discouraged look when she replied, "In the beginning I *did* suggest that the faculty coöperate with our coach, but each one in turn said he was too busy to do so." Although the play in question was "As You Like It," the failure of the professors to coöperate in its production

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was entirely comprehensible because they were so busy preparing students to secure high enough marks to enable them to pass courses in Shakespeare that they found no time to bring his plays to life.

Yet Shakespeare himself was an actor, and his plays were written for actors, while most of them were not printed until after he was dead. That seems to me to be a very good reason why the actual production of a Shakespearean play should be included in the curriculum of every college.

This does not mean that I hold the belief that every professor of English Literature ought to be a dramatic director, but I do believe that every college faculty should provide a place for a very intelligent and well-equipped play producer and that his work should be well considered in the arrangement of the curriculum. If this were done, the other members of the faculty would not be too busy to confer with him and the production of a play would then represent the naturally unified effort of several departments.

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The same thing should be true of every school where dramatic play should not be regarded merely as a diversion from the regular work but absolutely in line with it and the training of the play producer should be a vital part of normal educational work.

At present educators generally are not deeply interested in this work of play producing, either because they have not as yet realized its profound possibilities or because they have seen a good deal of purely mechanical and unintelligent work done in the production of school and college plays. The operation as regards the school production is usually to hire a dramatic coach. In order to spend as little time and money as possible the players learn their lines "by heart" and at rehearsal the coach gives them whatever "stage business" he has arranged—something he believes will create effect for an audience.

It is true that such a process is a purely mechanical one and as such is totally uninteresting to a true educator. But all this is entirely changed when the educator regards the play as

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a means of bringing the child and the adolescent to realize a social scene of action and the various characters in the play as concrete types by means of which the player can form a definite mental image. Considered in this way, the educator soon realizes that the concentrated life of a worthy drama, better than any text book, affords a striking illustration of the way in which fundamental forces work.

Moreover, the intelligent play producer must have very clearly defined in his own mind the effect which each character in the play should produce on the audience, and this knowledge he must use only as an aid to stimulate creative thought and action in the player. He must work with the thought in mind that the use of dramatic instinct toward interpretation is educationally valuable only as it is founded on the creative thought of the player, only as it is used as a means of widening and deepening the appreciation of social relations, ways and ideals.

Such work should not be regarded as unworthy of any educator, it matters not how

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many or how important may be the college degrees which he possesses.

It is certain that much of the work of schools and colleges as it is followed to-day is condemned by results. School work does not carry over into life. It is all process and preparation for life instead of being life itself. We have not as yet, through all the methods employed in school and college work, developed a National Drama, nor have we succeeded in establishing any standard of taste and appreciation in the students who go out from our schools and colleges. This is the examination that counts in the world outside of school, and this ought to be the teacher's standard in the final analysis.

Tangible, motivated ideals are what the educator should crowd into the fertile period of adolescence. Professors of psychology in college courses dwell upon the power of volition and of emotion. Might they not be ready and eager to coöperate with the intelligent play-producer who is able to seize upon the emotion which lies at the root of youth's universal de-

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sire to enact characters in fiction, and might they not be willing to help give youth a "try-out" chance to put his thought into action and to observe for himself the effect. Psychologists know that ideas which have become a part of the working motives of action are often effectual as moral guides, but mere ideas about moral action may remain as dead and ineffective as ideas about Greek and Roman history.

But we may be optimistic in our hope that a constantly increasing number of great teachers will become dwellers in the Kingdom, for the educator is already beginning to take upon himself this vitally important training of young people in plays and refuses to leave it to the unequipped, usually uncultivated coach who, by inducing artificial emotion for purposes of effect on an audience, undoes the very things which the educator tries to accomplish.

The day has come when the college professor is awakening to the fact that he need not go far afield to seek some artificial stimulus to keep young people at their studies, when a natural one is within reach.

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Thrilling spontaneous uplift at the commission of a noble deed: shuddering natural disgust at the execution of a vile, debasing action—these are the things the true educator desires to see in the young.

Let him, then, look up for a time from his volume of Kant and Freud and the others and study at first hand the psychology of the “gallery gods’” hisses and applause. Is not the effect of the right development of the dramatic instinct well worthy of study by the greatest educators when it causes the veriest street gamin to experience pleasure and pain at the right and wrong act?

I ask myself, What is true education if it is not training youth to feel just that?

CHAPTER XIV

THE REAL KINGDOM WILL HAVE A CHILDREN'S
THEATRE WHERE GOOD PLAYS, SUITABLE FOR
CHILDREN TO SEE, MAY BE ENJOYED.

THESE is another serious trust which rests with the teachers who use the dramatic method in their daily work; it is the trust of preparing audiences for the theatres; it is the trust of making the child of to-day the cultured appreciator of ten years hence, for it is only at this period of youth that the foundations of taste and discrimination are permanently laid.

Those who know the situation are obliged to realize that there is, at present, an almost complete lack of standard in this work of play writing and play producing in our schools. Many have expressed the belief that this state of affairs would improve if a really good stage with adequate equipment could be built in every school throughout the land. While I agree that

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such a stage would be an excellent addition to any school, I am certain it would not serve to solve the problem of training childhood's dramatic instinct toward creative expression. It is far more important to open the eyes of the teacher's soul so that her spirit may be brought into harmony with the spirit of the interpreter than it is to erect any kind of stage, no matter how perfect its architecture may be. There are many times when the perfection of mechanical things is rather a hindrance than a help. The trouble really is that in the schools young people are not taught to understand what constitutes a good play, and they frequently do not know the difference between a moving picture and a drama.

There seems to be a total confusion in the minds of the children on this point, and I believe there may be much confusion in the minds of the teachers as well.

Since the moving picture is amongst the most popular and widely spread industries in our country, it is imperative that we teachers should have firmly fixed in our own minds the funda-

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mental and eternal difference between a moving picture and a drama, and that we should be able to teach this difference clearly to our pupils. Many of the plays written and produced in the schools to-day are really only moving pictures with some dialogue tacked on. This is comprehensible, because the children are so apt to copy in form the thing which they so constantly see, and unfortunately children do not frequently see interesting dramas suitable to their years.

During the past few seasons, I have made the experiment at the holiday periods of presenting plays for children with casts of excellent professional actors. The experiment has been successful because the plays were the kind that are written by people who are able to reimagine their own childhood; not the kind written about children by people who do not understand children; for the latter are always the kind that the children do not like. At these holiday matinées programs of one-act plays have been presented, and I make a point of distributing cards to all the children in the audience, asking them to state which play they like best. Invariably the

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majority choose the best play, proving the truth that the germ of the tired business man does not exist in any little child.

The tired business man and the bored society woman who challenge the actors to interest them are entirely man-made and not God-made products. The fresh, unsullied dramatic instinct of the little child always responds to the best in drama, and that is why it is such a terrible pity to ever "play down" to the child. I am aware that many dramatic critics do not agree with this belief, but their skepticism does not alter the truth that children are better and more responsive audiences for good drama than are adults. I speak with authority on this point because I have been producing plays for children for seventeen years and experience surmounts all theory.

If only the story of the play is sufficiently interesting, the better the dialogue and the more spiritual its interpretation, the more responsive is the audience of children. This was clearly shown in our presentation at the holiday matinéés of Lady Gregory's play, "The Travelling

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Man," a play which might not usually be placed on a program for children.

In "The Travelling Man" an Irish mother in her cottage kitchen on Hallowe'en tells her little son the story of how she was brought to the house seven years ago by a wonderful man who met her on the roadside, where she had stumbled, after being turned out by the neighbors because of some things that were said against her. She tells the child that each Hallowe'en since she has expected him to come, for when he left her at the doorstep he said, "I will come again, and do not lose yourself in the things that I leave you." The mother goes out to a neighbor's to borrow white flour to finish baking a cake in preparation for the wonderful visit, and while she is gone the man, dressed as a common peasant, barefoot and weary, carrying a branch with apples and flowers, enters and is heartily welcomed by the child. Together the man and the child play and sing and make a garden on the floor with the plates and cups from the dresser. The woman, returning, finds the child singing in the arms of the man,



A scene from "The Traveling Man"

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and, dragging him away, she berates the man for bringing the red mud from the roads onto her clean floor. The child begs her not to blame the man because he has come a long way and is weary, but she turns him out of doors. The child, seeing he has forgotten his branch, runs after him, and, returning with the branch, he shows it to the mother, saying: "He has gone over the river and there was a light before his feet. He bid me bring back this and show it to yourself." Looking at the branch, the mother says, "It is a branch which did not grow on any tree of this world. He has gone, he has gone, and I never knew him. He was that stranger who gave me all. He is the King of the World."

From the beginning to the end of this play the audiences of children sat spellbound. I watched hundreds of them lean tensely forward, to lose no word which was spoken, and the story of the play sank into their very souls. We have given this play for children of all ages, from kindergarten to high school age, and it has never failed to interest absorbingly. At the termination of one of the Christmas matinées a

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mother with five children came to the stage entrance and asked whether her boys and girls might go behind for they were anxious to see how scenes were placed. As they filed onto the stage the eight-year-old boy said to me, "I want to see the road the Travelling Man came down. I like that man so much. I wish I could play with him and hear his songs."

Yet the New York dramatic critics all said, "'The Travelling Man' is the finest play of the three, but its presence on a bill for children is incomprehensible. It is far above the heads of children." One very well-known critic said, "Children would prefer to see a Charley Chaplin film."

Now, setting all theory aside and purely through long experience with audiences of children, I am able to tell the critics that they are all wrong. This play and others of its kind are not above the hearts of children, and since we feel before we reason, such plays are not above the heads of children either. Children are the natural-born audiences because they possess what every true dramatist and every true actor

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wants to secure, emotional response. Now is it not a real sin to waste this divine gift on a Charley Chaplin film? Every time I see this being done I feel like crying out in sacred language, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of 'Drama.' "

Yet this strong dramatic emotion of childhood and adolescence is so powerful that it is easily led in either the right or the wrong direction. While I was in Indianapolis a few months ago a young mother called on me in company with her ten-year-old daughter. They had just witnessed a film play of "Snow White" at a moving picture theatre. "Wasn't that a lovely play?" said the mother to the little girl. "Ye-es," assented the child very hesitatingly. "But next time let's go and see a *real* play, where a man runs away with another man's wife." The mother was shocked, but my sympathy was all with the child when she told me enthusiastically that she had seen every play that had come to their neighborhood moving picture house for the last two years.

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The child loved dramatic emotion. Every child loves dramatic emotion. Yet I have seen vast audiences of tens of thousands of children so swayed by the powerful dramatic climaxes of the *spoken* drama of "Snow White" that boys and girls alike have risen from their seats and waved their hats and handkerchiefs in excited approval. The story of "Snow White" and the seven dwarfs is far more interesting to every child than is the story of any sex drama, but my little Indianapolis friend had been fed only on sex stories in play form and she did not relish the flavor of any other sort, and how should she? If you feed a child on all sorts of highly spiced foods with entrées and relishes besides, he will not care for mush and milk even when he is hungry. He may be forced to eat it if there is nothing else served to him, but he will not relish it. Yet if you begin with the mush and milk, as every wise parent does, the child will relish it greatly if he is given an occasional dash of strawberry jam and sugar buns.

All parents are tremendously concerned about their children's food, as they rightly

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should be, and why is it of superabundant importance to feed the stomachs of children just right? Because they are young growing things and it is in these years that the foundations of good digestion and of perfect physique are established. Books enough to fill libraries have been written on "Child Hygiene" and "Food Values for Children." But how about the soul of the child? Is it not also a young, growing thing, and as such is it not of *more* than superabundant importance to feed it just right? The *ideals* that this growing soul shall promulgate will be alive when the *deeds* that this growing body has accomplished will be dead. Emotional, dramatic hygiene is as important in the life of the child as physical hygiene. And shall I be accused of heresy if I say that it is even *more* important, since physic may cure a spoiled stomach, but there exists no known cure for the constant perversion of childhood's Dramatic Instinct?

The disease which results from feeding the soul of childhood with the wrong dramatic motives or from allowing the soul of the child to

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starve entirely is widespread in our land, and moreover it is contagious. It fills our moving picture houses with the young caramel chewers, it greatly helps the business of the dance halls, and it has a good big share in helping to fill the prisons.

But the situation is hopeful, nevertheless, for there are many people who are beginning to know the child as he is and not take for granted all that the adult says about him. Such ones realize the national importance of laboratory inspection and distribution of Dramatic Food for Children.

But the great army of teachers must be the ones to work in the laboratories, and in them they must learn that the genetic basis of all art and all religion is sympathy with the things of nature and with the emotions of human nature. Learning how to put their lessons into the dramatic play form, that form so entrancingly interesting to all children, the teachers must learn what fundamental character traits to use and how to use them concretely so as to best develop childhood's sympathy. They must real-

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ize that the criminal is an egoist and that all forms of crime come through lack of sympathy. So the teachers must learn how best to use the dramatic method to train the morale of youth, one of the basic principles of the right use of the drama.

The teachers must also realize that the appreciator is, in general, an altruist and that all forms of bad taste in art, in literature and in drama come through wrong training in childhood and adolescence. So the teachers must study and employ the dramatic play form to train the taste of youth, and then we will have the much talked-of National Theatre.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE KINGDOM A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD US.

IT has been said that the child is a new discovery in education, but I feel persuaded that my readers who have followed me thus far will concede that "The Kingdom of the Child," which is Imagination, is a country as yet fairly unexplored by the usual teacher and parent. The discovery of the child will not be general until we fully recognize that every normal child possesses, in embryo, the power to visualize and to characterize the unseen. It is merely the same gift that is possessed in developed form by the genius. The little child, unaided, characterizes in action the flight of a bird. Shelley, in his immortal poem, "The Skylark," characterizes the same force. The artist's gift is a developed thing, but at root it is exactly the same power as that with which the child is endowed by reason of his divine heritage.

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The need of learning how best to direct and develop this power of Imagination is the greatest need which the world faces to-day.

Too long have we regarded life as a struggle to achieve material ends and the business of life as efficiency in handling material things. The scientific point of view, the outward or thinking activity, is not enough; we must learn how to combine and carry this over to the artistic point of view, the inward or feeling activity, since the latter is far deeper, more profound and more abiding than the former. The scientific or the thinking part of life in contradistinction to the emotional or the feeling part of life, may be compared to the iceberg which is nine-tenths under water and but one-tenth above water, or to the topmost branches of a tree with all its strong, sturdy roots underground.

Once we realize the superimportance of the submerged nine-tenths of the emotional life, we shall fully recognize and condemn any educational system which fails to study the emotions in order to train them to adequate expression. We shall condemn the educational system which

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refuses to train its teachers to realize that Imagination is not a sort of luxury or superfluity in education, something over and above the things that have to do with our practical life or with the real world. Imagination occupies a distinct place in any activity that is human, and the little child shows us that this is true because he exercises imagination in every one of his undirected, self-initiated activities which always take the form of dramatic play.

The child uses the least possible material in order to help him build up imagery; the paper crown makes the queen, the toy wooden sword makes the soldier. This is perhaps the most potent suggestion which we adults receive within the Kingdom; not to overload our teaching with mechanical principles which serve no purpose, which are indeed merely hurtful when they are regarded as anything except aids to the development of the soul.

Lazy helps of imitation obstruct all our avenues to the soul. As teachers we have only to suggest and to suggest rightly. Gradually we lead the child to think away from merely his

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own feeling towards the new character, we develop his imagination to the forgetting of self and lead him through to the spiritual vision of the thing outside self.

Through the creative interpretation of characters in good drama we shall bring children into touch with all the great reservoirs of life, for we know that children, at times, need to be sad as well as to be happy, to experience pain as well as pleasure, and to be despairing as well as to be glad, for only thus can the passions be sublimated from a lower to a higher plane.

We have seen that the right kind of training for participation in a play where many characters of many kinds meet together always means for the child an understanding of communal honor, duty, patriotism, a development of sympathy and a clearer understanding of human beings, the one by the other. The child works naturally in this World of Play, his own Kingdom, and we shall never be true teachers until we shall learn to work as subjects within the Kingdom, along with the child.

THE KINGDOM OF THE CHILD

We as adult teachers can do much to train our own dulled imaginations by sympathetically watching men and women to note how the messages of the truth of expression come back to us again and again. We see that, if the spirit is beautiful at the age of sixty, the body too is beautiful. If the spirit is crabbed and selfish, the body too is ugly. Spirit is the one and only lasting power.

An education which deals primarily with the soul, the spirit, the imagination, call it what you will, is the only education which is worth while to-day.

We have stopped short at teaching facts. We must go on, from Kindergarten through University, and translate facts into truths, into values, as the little child does.

We are all awakened to the knowledge that a new kind of democracy will be born of this world war, a democracy greater than any dream of now, greater than the present narrow vision of any class.

Perhaps it is to be a democracy that will recognize no privileged class.

A CHILD SHALL LEAD US

We need to be ready to meet the needs of this new democracy of the new world—and a little child shall lead us.

THE END



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